



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Brooklyn Juvenile Center Counselor Charged with Putting Teen in Chokehold *Case being investigated and prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Brooklyn, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced a juvenile counselor who was employed by the Crossroads Juvenile Center, was arrested and charged with multiple counts for allegedly putting an adolescent in her care in a chokehold and slamming the girl's head into the ground.

Charmaine Blake (DOB: 02/18/74) of the Bronx was arrested on a criminal complaint and charged with:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class "A" misdemeanor;
- One count of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation, a class "A" misdemeanor;
- One count of Menacing in the Third Degree, a class "B" misdemeanor;
- One count of Attempted Assault in the Third Degree, a class "A" misdemeanor; and
- One count of Harassment in the Second Degree, a violation.

"Once again we have a case of a violent attack involving an act of strangulation where the victim had little or no visible injury," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "We cannot overemphasize the danger of chokeholds and acts of strangulation. Pressure to the neck can very quickly lead to unconsciousness and is potentially lethal. Any youth counselor, like this defendant, who chooses to attack a child in his or her care, will be held accountable."

The charges in this case stem from an incident that occurred on May 12, 2015, in which the defendant is alleged to have put the 16-year-old in a chokehold, taking the victim down to the ground, placing her knee on the girl's neck, grabbing her hair and slamming the victim's head into the ground.

The defendant was arraigned in Kings County Criminal Court before the Honorable Donald Leo and released on her own recognizance. Blake is due back in court on May 23, 2016. She also resigned her position.

The case was investigated by the Justice Center and is being prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor David Kim.

The Justice Center and its statewide hotline and incident reporting system began operations on June 30, 2013. It is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week by trained professionals who

receive reports of allegations of abuse and neglect of people with special needs. Once a report is received by its Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline, it is logged and assessed. Serious cases of abuse or neglect are assigned to the Justice Center's investigation team or, when appropriate, to a local law enforcement agency for follow-up. Through the services provided by the Justice Center's Individual and Family Support Unit--victims, their families, personal representatives and guardians receive guidance and information about the reporting and investigation process and support during criminal cases and court proceedings.

The Justice Center also maintains a statewide registry of all persons who have been found to be responsible for serious or repeated acts of abuse and neglect. Once placed on the registry, known as the "Staff Exclusion List" or SEL, they are prohibited by law from ever working again with people with disabilities or special needs.

The facility where the alleged abuse occurred is licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). OCFS is one of six state agencies under the jurisdiction of the Justice Center. The Justice Center also oversees certain facilities or programs that are operated, licensed or certified by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the State Education Department (SED).

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Editor's note: In compliance with Disciplinary Rule 7-107A of the Code of Professional Responsibility, you are advised that a charge is an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.



Charmaine Blake (DOB: 02/18/74)