



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Erie County Caregiver Sentenced *Case Investigated and Prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Williamsville, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning has announced the sentencing of an Erie County man who earlier this year pled guilty to charges that he sexually abused an adult female with developmental disabilities in his care.

George R. West of Williamsville (DOB 04/10/58) was sentenced to six years' probation and will register as a Level 2 sex offender. In February he pled guilty to two counts of Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree, a class "A" misdemeanor. He had also been terminated from his position as a direct care staff employee of People Inc. of Amherst, New York. West was sentenced by the Honorable Christopher J. Burns, Justice of the Supreme Court, Erie County.

The guardian for the victim, who spoke at the sentencing said: "The hideous abuses [the victim] suffered, both physical and emotional, at the hands of George West, are particularly insidious because he worked as a caretaker and was entrusted with the care and protection of disabled and vulnerable residents. While I would have liked nothing more than for George West to serve jail time, I accept this plea because I could not allow [the victim] to have to relive what happened. [The victim] is finally just starting to make noticeable progress in recovery. I could never risk the chance of hampering this recovery. My family is truly grateful for the time and commitment of the Special Prosecutor's Office in particular for sparing [the victim] from going to trial and accepting this plea."

"As prosecutors we have to consider the wishes of the victim and the victim's family who know what's best for their loved ones. Vulnerable victims and their families deserve the same consideration. In this case, this defendant has been held accountable. Both on probation and as a registered sex offender, the defendant will be monitored to protect those who could be victimized by him in the future," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "The disposition in this case spared the victim from the additional trauma of testifying at a trial."

The defendant was adjudicated a Level 2 sex offender and surrendered his teaching license. West also waived any right to challenge a determination of the Justice Center that would prohibit him from the future care of vulnerable persons in the State of New York.

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.

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.

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.

People Inc. is certified by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). OPWDD 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 of Children and Family Services (OCFS), 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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