

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 17, 2014  
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## **Bernard Fineson Developmental Center Employee Indicted for Abuse**

*Incident Reported to NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Hotline*

Queens, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that a Queens County Grand Jury has handed up a three-count indictment against Barbara Lee (DOB: 02/18/62) for allegedly abusing a woman in her care at the Bernard Fineson Developmental Center in Queens Village. The facility is operated by the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

The incident first came to the attention of law enforcement officials when it was reported to the Justice Center's Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline. A call center representative opened a case tracking file and Justice Center investigators launched an investigation.

Lee was arraigned on a three-count indictment charging her with:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of a Vulnerable Elderly Person, or an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the second degree, a class "E" Felony; and
- One count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the second degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and
- One Count of Assault in the third degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor.

The defendant allegedly struck the victim in the face with her elbow, fracturing the woman's jaw. When another staff member observed the victim crying, Lee made excuses for the service recipient's behavior, which resulted in the victim not receiving treatment for her injuries until the following day.

Lee was arraigned in State Supreme Court in Queens and has a return date of January 13, 2015. She has also been placed on administrative leave by her employer. The case is being prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutors Deandra Macomber and 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.

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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 Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (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 Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), 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.