



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Justice Center Commemorates 50th Anniversary of NYS Office of Victim Services

NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor/Inspector General Patricia E. Gunning joined with District Attorneys, law enforcement professionals and victim advocates from across the state on August 2, 2016 to mark the 50th anniversary of New York State's Office of Victim Services (OVS) at a ceremony at the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

In 1966, New York became the second state in the nation to establish a program to provide financial aid for families of crime victims. Over the past 50 years, the Crime Victim's Compensation Board, now the Office of Victim Services has assisted hundreds of thousands of crime victims and their families.

OVS funds more than 200 victim services programs throughout the state. In addition to providing compensation, these programs offer counseling, crisis intervention, emergency shelter and legal assistance to victims. In 2014, the Justice Center received a three-year grant to expand its Individual and Family Support Unit. Advocates employed by the Justice Center assist individuals with special needs and their families or guardians when they have questions or concerns about allegations of abuse or neglect reported to the Justice Center. In criminal cases, guidance and support is provided to individuals who may need to appear as witnesses or file a victim impact statement with the courts or who need help seeking compensation for medical costs, counseling, or other case-related expenses from the crime victim's fund. Additional information about the Justice Center's Individual and Family Support Unit services can be found [here](#).

"The Justice Center is committed to seeking justice for vulnerable victims who have been abused or neglected by staff and holding offenders accountable for their conduct," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "We are indebted to OVS for ensuring that victims with special needs and their families receive the support they need."

Gunning was joined by Justice Center Deputy Special Prosecutor Jacqueline Kagan and Justice Center advocate Wendi Pazik at the press conference to mark the agency's anniversary.

OVS plans to launch a public awareness campaign later this month to educate New Yorker's about its services. It will include a new web page featuring PSAs, testimonials, a timeline of the agency's history and the services it provides. A [short video](#) explores OVS' work through interviews with survivors and victim service professionals.

About the Justice Center

Established by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the Legislature, the Justice Center is dedicated to supporting and protecting people with special needs and disabilities. The Justice Center serves as an advocate for people with disabilities and special needs. It is also a law enforcement agency that has concurrent jurisdiction with state and local law enforcement agencies and District Attorneys to investigate and, when appropriate, prosecute allegations of abuse and neglect committed against people with special needs in New York.

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