



## Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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### **Strangulation and Assault Charges Lodged Against Rehabilitation Center Employee**

*Case being investigated and prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Olean, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced a direct support worker employed by The Rehabilitation Center in Olean has been arrested on multiple charges for allegedly grabbing a person with developmental disabilities in his care by the throat and squeezing the victim's neck.

Ahmad Burney (DOB: 09/27/64), of Olean was arrested on a Misdemeanor Complaint charging him with:

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

"As is the case in the vast majority of strangulation assaults, the victim had very little visible injury," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "However, the potential severity of this criminal offense should not be underestimated. Pressure applied to an individual's neck can quickly result in the loss of consciousness and has the potential to be lethal. The Justice Center will not hesitate to bring these very serious cases to light and prosecute them."

The charges in this case stem from an incident which occurred on February 25, 2016, in which the defendant allegedly kicked a chair out from under the victim and then pulled the victim up off the floor by his throat, while squeezing the victim's neck.

Burney was arraigned in Olean City Court before the Honorable William J. Gabler and was released on his own recognizance. He is due back in court on April 5, 2016. The defendant has been terminated from his position.

The case was investigated by the Justice Center, with assistance from the Olean Police Department. Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Mary-Jean Bowman is prosecuting the case.

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 Rehabilitation Center is licensed by the NYS 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 Mental Health (OMH), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), 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.



Ahmad Burney (DOB: 09/27/64)