



## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 14, 2013**

Contact: Diane Ward, Office of Communications  
(518) 549-0200  
diane.ward@justicecenter.ny.gov

### **Berkshire Farm Employee Arrested for Allegedly Abusing Resident**

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

Canaan, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning announced today that Aaron Jackson (DOB: 10/25/70), who was employed at Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth was arrested for allegedly abusing a resident following an investigation conducted by the New York State Police. The facility is licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Families (OCFS).

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. Justice Center investigators contacted State Police in Livingston and provided assistance with the investigation.

Jackson was arrested on November 11, 2013 on a Misdemeanor Complaint charging him with:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and
- One count of Harassment in the Second Degree, a Violation.

According to the complaint, the defendant repeatedly punched the teenager in the face and chest. Jackson was arraigned in Canaan Town Court. He has been suspended without pay. The case is being prosecuted by the Columbia County District Attorney's office.

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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 (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.

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is one of six state agencies under the jurisdiction of the Justice Center. It 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 for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), 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.