



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

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### **Former Hutchings Psychiatric Center R.N. Indicted for Abusing Child and Falsifying Records**

*Case being Investigated and Prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Syracuse, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced a registered nurse, who had been employed by the Hutchings Psychiatric Center, was arrested and arraigned on a six count indictment charging her with abusing a 6-year-old child in her care and putting false information into the child's medical record to cover up her actions.

Valerie Brown of Kirkville (DOB: 12/07/62) was arraigned on July 26, 2016 before the Honorable Walter W. Hafner, Jr. of Onondaga County Court. She was charged with:

- 1 count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree, a class "E" felony;
- 1 count of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class "A" misdemeanor;
- 1 count of Tampering with Public Records in the First Degree, a class "D" felony;
- 1 count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class "E" felony;
- 1 count of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a class "E" felony; and
- 1 count of Official Misconduct, a class "A" misdemeanor.

Brown, a registered nurse, has resigned from her position. Bail was set at \$5,000 cash/\$10,000 bond. The defendant is due back in court on August 16, 2016.

"Children receiving mental health services in state operated hospitals deserve to be safe and treated with compassion. Nurses in particular know that accurate patient records are crucial to providing adequate and appropriate care," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "It is unconscionable for a licensed medical professional to endanger the welfare of a young child and then document falsely in the youngster's permanent medical record, as this defendant is alleged to have done."

The charges in this case stem from an incident that occurred on December 9, 2015. The defendant is alleged to have repeatedly pushed and shoved a young child to the ground and then falsified records about the incident.

Assistant Special Prosecutor Robin Unwin is prosecuting the case. The investigation was conducted by the Justice Center.

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.

Hutchings Psychiatric Center is operated by the Office of Mental Health (OMH). OMH 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 Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), the Department of Health (DOH), Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the State Education Department (SED).

*Editor's note: In compliance with Rule 3.6(b)(6) of the Rules of Professional Conduct, you are advised that a charge is an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*



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BROWN, Valerie M