



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 24, 2015  
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### **Orange AHRC Van Driver Sentenced After Leaving Man with Autism Unattended** *Justice Center Toolkit Provides Reminder About Vehicle Safety Tips*

Hamptonburgh, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced the sentencing of a former driver for Orange AHRC who left a non-verbal man with autism alone in an unheated van for approximately five hours in January 2014.

Robert Kastmann (DOB: 04-13-53) of Campbell Hall appeared on July 22, 2015 before the Hon. Richard B. Golden in Hamptonburgh Town Court and was sentenced to a conditional discharge as a result of his guilty plea for Attempted Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the second degree, a Class B Misdemeanor. The defendant has been terminated from his position.

The case was investigated by the Justice Center and prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Deidre Chuckrow.

“This conviction stems from the defendant’s failure to follow proper procedures when he neglected to check the van for passengers at the end of his shift, said Special Prosecutor Gunning. “Fortunately, the victim came through the ordeal unharmed, but the case serves as an important reminder of the serious risk posed by leaving people with special needs unattended in vehicles. The danger is particularly acute during the summer months when temperatures inside vehicles can soar to potentially deadly levels in a matter of minutes.”

A new resource developed by the Justice Center highlights common sense practices to help keep people receiving services safe. This *Spotlight on Prevention* toolkit focuses on the dangers of unattended vehicles. It includes a video gallery on heatstroke dangers, a vehicle hang tag and safety tips that can be used by drivers, transport aides, provider agency personnel and the public to prevent an accidental tragedy from occurring.

For more information on the toolkit and the Justice Center’s prevention initiatives, please visit the Justice Center’s website at: <http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/spotlight-prevention/home>

Since its inception on June 30, 2013, the Justice Center’s 24/7 toll-free hotline for reporting allegations of abuse and neglect has received more than 160 reports of individuals with special needs being left unaccompanied in a vehicle. None of the individuals suffered serious injury.

## **About the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs**

Established by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the Legislature, the NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs is dedicated to supporting and protecting people with special needs and disabilities.

The Justice Center serves as a law enforcement agency which seeks to ensure that individuals who receive services from a facility or provider that is operated, licensed or certified by six state agencies, are protected from abuse, neglect and mistreatment. Assessing risks to the health and safety of individuals receiving services, and supporting commensurate action to prevent potential abuse and neglect are critical components of the agency's independent oversight role.

Through its advocacy-related services, the Justice Center also provides information, technical assistance and training to support and empower individuals with disabilities of all ages, in all settings.

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