



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

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*An arrest photo is available at the bottom of the release.*

### **Cheektowaga Developmental Aide Charged with Abuse**

*Case investigated by Cheektowaga Police and Prosecuted by the Justice Center*

Cheektowaga, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced that Cassandra Neasman-Young, who is employed as a developmental aide by the Western New York Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO), was arrested and arraigned on charges for allegedly abusing a woman in her care.

Neasman-Young, (DOB: 01/28/71) appeared before Cheektowaga Town Justice Dennis Gorski on June 30, 2016 and pled not guilty to:

- One count of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the Second degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and,
- One count of Harassment in the Second degree, a Violation.

The charges stem from an incident that occurred on May 10, 2016 when the defendant allegedly called the victim an expletive, grabbed her by the hair and slammed her head against a bus window.

"Vulnerable New Yorkers, like this victim, who have a developmental disability should never be demeaned or mistreated by staff entrusted to care for them," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "We commend the work of the Cheektowaga Police Department, which investigated and gathered the evidence in this case that led to this arrest."

The defendant was released on her own recognizance and is due back in court on August 8, 2016. Neasman-Young has been placed on administrative leave. Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Jennifer Whitman 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 facility where the alleged abuse occurred is operated by the 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 Children and Family Services, (OCFS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), 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.*



Cassandra Neasman-Young, (DOB: 01/28/71)