



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 7, 2014
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Highland Residential Aide Indicted for Allegedly Strangling Teen

Case Being Prosecuted by NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs

Kingston, NY-- NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning today announced that William Spencer (DOB 11/18/63) of Kingston was arraigned in Ulster County Court on an eight-count indictment charging him with strangling an adolescent in his care at the Highland Residential Center in Highland, New York. The facility serves juveniles placed with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

The indictment charges Spencer with:

- One count of Strangulation in the second degree, a class "D" Felony;
- One count of Attempted Strangulation in the second degree, a class "E" Felony;
- One count of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- One count of Reckless Endangerment in the second degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor;
- One count of Menacing in the third degree, a class "B" Misdemeanor;
- Two counts of Assault in the third degree, a class "A" Misdemeanor; and
- One count of Attempted Assault in the third degree, a class "B" Misdemeanor.

According to the indictment, the defendant allegedly strangled the victim causing impairment, physical injury and/or substantial pain. Spencer remains on suspension from his position as an aide. He was released on his own recognizance and is due back in court on September 2, 2014. The case is being prosecuted by Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Christina Calabrese.

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.

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.

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The Office of Children and Family Services 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 for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), 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.



William Spencer (DOB: 11/18/63)