



# Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 5, 2015  
Contact: Diane Ward, Office of Communications  
(518) 549-0200  
[diane.ward@justicecenter.ny.gov](mailto:diane.ward@justicecenter.ny.gov)

## Highland Residential Aide Convicted of Abuse

*Case Prosecuted by the 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 announced today that William Spencer (DOB 11/18/63), admitted in court that he abused an adolescent in his care while employed as a Youth Division Aide at the Highland Residential Center in Highland, New York. The facility is operated by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Spencer, who is a resident of Kingston, entered a guilty plea in Ulster County Court before the Hon. Donald A. Williams to:

- One count of Attempted Strangulation in the second degree, a class "E" Felony.

"Young people receiving services have the right to be free of threats to their physical safety and well-being," said Special Prosecutor Gunning. "The Justice Center and the District Attorneys of this state will vigorously investigate and prosecute these crimes."

The defendant admitted he placed his hands in contact with the neck and/or throat of the victim and applied pressure while slamming the victim's head and/or body causing physical injury. Spencer will be sentenced to 5 years of probation on May 13, 2015. As a condition of a plea agreement, he agreed to resign his state position and will be permanently barred from working with individuals with special needs in New York State.

Justice Center Assistant Special Prosecutor Christina Calabrese prosecuted the case. Justice Center investigators led the investigation and coordinated the arrest with State Police Troop F.

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.

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).

###

**William Spencer (DOB: 11/18/63)**

