

February 26, 2008

Three Former Somerset County Group Home Counselors Charged with Neglecting Resident

TRENTON - Attorney General Anne Milgram and Criminal Justice Director Gregory A. Paw announced that three former Hillsborough group home residential counselors have been indicted on a charge that they neglected a disabled resident of the group home.

According to Insurance Fraud Prosecutor Greta Gooden Brown, Ben Imbayi Akengo, 29, of East Brunswick, Dennis Waweru, 31, of Sayreville, and Sam Njoroge, 24, of North Plainfield, were each charged with third-degree neglect of an elderly or disabled person.

The indictment returned by the Somerset County grand jury alleges that on Oct. 19, 2006, Akengo, Waweru and Njoroge, all formerly employed as residential counselors at Devereaux Group Home on Mountain View Road in Hillsborough, neglected a disabled adult male and did not fulfill their legal duty to care for the resident. At trial, the state intends to offer evidence that Akengo, Waweru and Njoroge knew that the resident had suffered bruises and contusions to his face and lower body but failed to provide medical attention necessary for his care. The indictment did not identify the disabled resident who was the victim of the alleged crime.

The investigation into this matter was conducted by the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, which investigates and prosecutes both civil and criminal Medicaid fraud, as well as abuse or neglect of the elderly and disabled at institutions that receive Medicaid funding.

State Investigator Patricia Yellen and Deputy Attorney General Yvette Gibbons were assigned to the investigation. Gibbons presented the case to the Somerset County grand jury. The Hillsborough Township Police Department assisted in the investigation.

The indictment, which was handed up on Feb. 22, is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Third-degree crimes carry a maximum punishment of five years in state prison and a criminal fine of \$15,000.