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***Disability Rights New York files Federal Lawsuit against New York State Justice Center
for Failure to Comply with Requests for Access to Investigation Records***

Albany, NY, January 9, 2015 – Disability Rights New York (DRNY) filed suit today against the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs (Justice Center) for illegally denying DRNY full access to the Justice Center’s records regarding its efforts to adequately protect New Yorkers with disabilities. The lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York in Albany, NY.

DRNY is the designated independent non-profit Protection & Advocacy System empowered by Congress to provide legal and non-legal advocacy services to people with disabilities in New York. This national Protection & Advocacy System was created by Congress as a direct result of the horrific conditions that were uncovered in the 1970’s at the Willowbrook State School and left un-remedied by New York State.

Pursuant to two federal statutes, the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act and the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, DRNY is specifically authorized to obtain records of abuse and neglect investigations conducted by state agencies, like the Justice Center, to ensure that people with disabilities are indeed protected from abuse and neglect. However, the Justice Center has been consistently refusing to provide DRNY with full access to records and reports regarding the abuse and neglect of several individuals, one of which resulted in death.

The Justice Center was created in 2013 by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature because the State’s system for investigating abuse and neglect of people with disabilities was seriously flawed, and many cases of serious abuse and neglect were not adequately investigated or remedied.

Timothy A. Clune, Executive Director of DRNY, said “*New York State has a well-documented history of failing to adequately investigate serious allegations of abuse and neglect against people with disabilities. The Justice Center was created to remedy this deplorable situation. It is deeply disturbing that the Justice Center is intentionally obstructing DRNY’s efforts to fulfill our important federal oversight mandate.*”