



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Orange County, NY**

Family Empowerment Council, Inc. (FEC) Board of Directors and Executive Leaders were present in Court today when Joseph O’Connell, the former Executive Director of FEC, who plead guilty to grand larceny as a result of thefts from the agency, was sentenced and ordered to make restitution to FEC.

The Family Empowerment Council, Inc. Board of Directors and Executive Leaders would like to thank the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the New York State Attorney General’s Office for its diligence in bringing a just resolution to the theft from Family Empowerment Council. “We are grateful that this breach of the public trust has been resolved without further impacting the services Family Empowerment Council provides to people with disabilities of Orange and Sullivan Counties”, stated Graham Skea, Family Empowerment Council’s current board chair.

“The officers and boards of both Family Empowerment Council, Inc., and Occupations, Inc., are shocked and appalled that an individual who had been put in a position of responsibility for FEC abused the trust that was placed in him. The willful disregard of the rules that guide the work of Family Empowerment Council has harmed our agency in many ways. The resources stolen from our agency were intended to be used to improve the lives of the people we serve. They were the victims of these crimes”, stated Amy Anderson Winchell, Executive Director of FEC and Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Occupations, Inc.

Graham Skea, Family Empowerment Council’s current board chair stated, “ The determination of the dedicated staff and Board of Directors has enabled us to overcome this sad situation only to make our agency stronger and to lead our mission into this new decade. Throughout this situation, FEC staff were able to ensure that the quality of services were never compromised and continue to provide the

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highest quality services. We are grateful that justice is being served and that the people who benefit from the services of Family Empowerment will continue to have these services available to meet their needs.”

Please direct all inquiries to Amy Anderson Winchell. at (845) 692-4454 ext.104 or (845) 343-8100 ext 237.

Family Empowerment Council was established in 1993 by a group of concerned parents, including the late Sally McGlynn, seeking family involvement in the establishment, provision and advocacy for services to their children with disabilities. It now provides a variety of services, including service coordination for diverse populations, support for families with children with serious mental illness, consumer-directed personal care, residential and day habilitation, respite and educational advocacy. Through a recent affiliation, Family Empowerment Council is now part of the Occupations, Inc. corporate system with FEC remaining as an independent entity continuing its mission. To learn more about the programs and services of Family Empowerment Council, visit [www.familyempowerment.org](http://www.familyempowerment.org).

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