



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - January 18, 2010

Family Empowerment Council, Inc., (FEC) learned on Friday January 15th that the former Executive Director of FEC Joseph O'Connell plead guilty to grand larceny as a result of thefts from the agency. The guilty plea is the direct result of an investigation launched early in 2007 by the FEC Board of Directors. By March of that year, the Board of Directors of FEC had become so concerned at what they suspected to be serious irregularities that they requested their attorney to retain a forensic auditor to investigate the situation.

By mid-December, having determined through the forensic audit that there had possibly been criminal activity perpetrated, legal counsel for FEC notified law enforcement personnel of the findings of the forensic audit. The investigation by the New York State Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Unit led to the guilty plea announced Friday. FEC's board and leadership thank the New York State Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Unit for its diligent efforts leading to this guilty plea and restitution agreement and its continuing investigation regarding other former FEC employees.

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. Graham Skea, Family Empowerment Council's current board chair commented, "On behalf of the Family Empowerment Council Board, we are deeply disturbed by the past actions of the former leadership. We are thankful that the board called for the reorganization of administrative leaders and ordered the forensic audit. We are further grateful for the dedicated staff's continued commitment to quality services for our clients. We have confidence in the leadership we have secured through our current Board of Directors

and our affiliation with Occupations, Inc., and remain solidly committed to providing the highest quality of care to our families, children, and adults with special needs.”

Amy Anderson Winchell, who is Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Occupations, Inc., and the Executive Director of FEC, said, “This is a very sad day for all of the current employees and board members of our two organizations who have worked so hard for so many years to provide for the needs of people who are among the most vulnerable in our community. We are confident that the people we serve did not experience any negative consequences from this situation. We will continue to work with the authorities to bring this matter to a just conclusion and have taken steps to prevent anything like this from ever happening again.”