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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Former Intermediate Care Facility Employee Arrested for Abuse of Disabled Resident

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Jackson County Sheriff's Office today arrested a former Sunland Center Pathways of Marianna employee for abuse of a disabled adult. Aariran Devore Batson allegedly threw a disabled resident out of the door of a dining hall and then slammed the resident into a gate multiple times before placing the resident in a headlock. Investigators with MFCU received information regarding the alleged abuse from the Florida Department of Children and Families, Adult Protective Services program.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "It's heartbreaking and infuriating that a caregiver would abuse a patient entrusted to their care—especially in such a violent and horrific manner. I am glad we were alerted to this abuse and the suspect was apprehended before more harm could be inflicted."

According to the investigation, on May 25, the victim allegedly tried to use a phone at the Sunland Center campus to call the police. Batson began pulling on the disabled adult to stop the phone call and subsequently threw the victim out the door. After administering a headlock, Batson attempted to cover up his actions by cleaning up an elbow injury sustained by the victim.

Batson faces one count of abuse of a disabled adult, a third-degree felony, and up to five years in Florida State Prison. The Attorney General's MFCU will prosecute the case through an

agreement with the Office of the State Attorney, Larry Basford, in the 14th Judicial Circuit.

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The Florida Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigates and prosecutes providers that intentionally defraud the state's Medicaid program through fraudulent billing practices. Medicaid fraud essentially steals from Florida's taxpayers. From January 2019 to the present, Attorney General Moody's MFCU has obtained more than $70 million in settlements and judgments. The Florida MFCU is funded through a grant totaling $26,329,510 for Federal Fiscal Year 2021, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General. The Federal Share of these funds is 75% totaling $19,747,136. The State Matching Share of these funds is 25% totaling $6,582,374 and is funded by Florida.