



*CAP Reg YNN*  
*Nov. 4, 2011*

# PEF NEWSCLIP

Comments by PEF members in the news media do not necessarily reflect the union's position on an issue or topic.

*Ken Brynien Quoted*

## Former CDPC patient gets five years for assaulting nurse

By: Erin Connolly

*A former psychiatric patient will spend five years in prison for attacking a nurse. Our Erin Connolly has more on how a relatively new law made the sentence possible.*

ALBANY, N.Y. -- Judi Rychcik of Delmar said, "I just wanted to say today is an important day for nurses."

It's been a tough few months for former nurse Judi Rychcik. In March, she was attacked by Terry James, a former patient at the Capital District Psychiatric Center where she worked.

Rychcik was struck unconscious and suffered serious injuries to her neck, skull and brain.

Rychcik said, "There are changes from this incident that I'll certainly be living with."

But Rychcik got some closure Friday in Albany County Court. Her attacker was sentenced to five years in prison and five years of post release supervision.

Rychcik said, "We want people to know, you can't hit a nurse."

This was the first time in New York a person was sentenced under the "Violence Against Nurses Law." The law, which went into effect last November, makes it a felony to injure a nurse.

PEF President Ken Brynien said, "Just because you're a nurse working in a potentially dangerous situation doesn't mean it should be expected

from time to time you could be injured on the job."

Supporters of the law say hospitals also have an obligation to protect their employees.

Apparently, James was triggered by the word "medication," something Rychcik and other nurses caring for him didn't know.

Albany County District Attorney David Soares said, "The CDPC is home to a number of violent offenders and they need to take a strong look at their policies and the amount of information they're providing to the staff, because you can't have dangerous people in your building and provide no warning to your staff as to the potential for harm."

And despite the attack, Rychcik said she misses being a nurse and misses the job she may never be able to do again.

"I think it was something I was good at," she said. "I spent many years developing this skill. I miss the people."

A tough road ahead for Judi Rychcik, but nonetheless a victory for all nurses.

We tried to contact the Capital District Psychiatric Center for a comment, but were directed to call the State Office of Mental Health. Officials there also declined to give us a statement based on federal and state confidentiality laws.



News Channel 13  
Nov. 4, 2011

# PEF NEWSCLIP

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## New law leads to jail time for nurse attack

ALBANY - For the first time in New York a defendant has been sentenced under the 1-year-old violence against nurses law.

Friday morning, Terry James was sentenced to five years behind bars. In March James attacked 51-year-old Judy Rychcik. She was a nurse at the Capital District Psychiatric Center. James punched her so hard she was knocked unconscious, suffering injury to her head, neck and jaw resulting in a traumatic brain injury.

"I haven't been able to return to work. I haven't been able to do a lot of things in my daily life. Driving is difficult sometimes. I have constant pain," Rychcik said.

"I hope that more nurses will get some protection under this law and people will think twice before they hit a nurse," she added.

Rychcik, who lives in Delmar, was a member of PEF. The union lobbied for the nurses felony law in hopes of protecting those health care providers.

PEF representatives joined the Rychcik family in court Friday morning.



WTEN TV

NOV. 4, 2011

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## Nurse attacker sentenced to five years in prison

ALBANY, N.Y. - A former patient at the Capital District Psychiatric Center was sentenced to five years in prison under the new Violence Against Nurses Law after severely injuring a nurse in March.

Terry James was sentenced Friday morning to five years in prison after pleading guilty to the assault of CDPC nurse Judi Rychcik on March 13, 2011 in Albany.

James knocked Rychick down while on the job, when she entered the room to respond to a crisis intervention code. Rychick was struck unconscious by a punch and suffered serious injuries to her neck, skull and brain.

Rychick, a PEF member, spoke out against workplace violence during the sentencing of James in Albany County Court.

"This may have been avoided, and I may not have been assaulted if there were more staff and more security. There should not be cut backs when dealing with people with mental health conditions," Rychcik said.

"The Violence Against Nurses Law was designed to help protect our nurses. PEF was aggressive in getting this law passed. It will go a long way in helping to protect our nurses when patients realize there will be consequences for their actions. We also applaud the district attorneys who have helped enforce this law."

The Violence Against Nurses Law, also known as the Nurses Felony Law, went into effect in November 2010.



Fox 23 News  
Nov. 4, 2011

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## Victim: "Today is an important day for nurses"

Reported by: Kristin Lowman

Terry James, a Capital District Psychiatric Center patient, attacked a nurse at the facility back in March, causing her serious injury.

After a landmark sentencing on Friday in Albany County Court, James will spend five years in prison for assaulting Judi Rychcik.

Rychcik said, "This was my second attack. Five months earlier I had my nose broken."

The Violence Against Nurses Law went into effect last November and makes it a felony to physically attack a nurse on duty.

Rychcik was knocked unconscious by James when she walked into a room at CDPC to respond to a crisis code. Her skull was split and she had injuries to her neck, head and brain.

Ken Brynien, PEF President said, "Just because you are a nurse in a potentially dangerous place it shouldn't be expected that you might be injured doing the job."

PEF, Rychcik's union, and the Albany County District Attorney's Office worked to get the law passed.

While they say the law will help to protect nurses on the job, they say more needs to be done. They want to see more being done to improve security and more to alert workers of high risk patients like Terry James.

Rychcik says they can access old charts, but says the information shouldn't be buried and take a long

time to find. She says someone did look for James' possible triggers the day she was attacked, but found nothing.

Her husband read a victim impact statement at the sentencing, telling James his wife now has short term memory problems and most importantly, may never return to her chosen profession.

Rychcik said, "I miss the people. You find an area that you like to work in and there is something to be said about being able to help people."

FOX23 contacted the State Office of Mental Health which oversees CDPC, about their policies, security and the case. A spokeswoman said they are unable to comment due to federal and state confidentiality laws.