

PRESS RELEASE

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Group Home Caretaker Found Guilty of Assaulting Mentally Ill and Blind Patient **Inspector General brings first case to court for criminal prosecution**

Washington, DC - Inspector General Charles C. Maddox and United States Attorney Roscoe C. Howard, Jr. announced that Defendant Winfred Lee of Washington, DC was found guilty in D.C. Superior Court on two misdemeanor counts, simple assault and attempted possession of a prohibited weapon. Each charge carries a maximum penalty of 180 days in jail. Lee, a former caretaker in a group home for the mentally and physically disabled, was observed beating a mentally disabled, blind resident with a Venetian Blind rod and with his fist. The defendant was ordered held in DC Jail until sentencing scheduled for December 14, 2001.

The case was handled jointly by the OIG's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The MFCU, which was created in March of 2000, handled this case as part of an effort called the Guardian Angel Project (GAP). GAP is a comprehensive program designed to deter and, when appropriate, punish health care providers who intentionally abuse or neglect vulnerable patients under their care. Among the institutions covered by GAP are nursing homes, group homes for the mentally

retarded, and facilities for the mentally ill. These institutions are a main focus of the MFCU's outreach and education efforts. MFCU investigators and attorneys make presentations to industry and professional groups covering topics such as detecting abuse, prompt and accurate reporting of abuse, and the most effective ways to work with law enforcement agencies. Also, emphasis is placed on outreach and education efforts aimed at senior citizen groups, consumer groups and ombudsmen for the elderly.