

DA NEWS

SPRING 2024
APRIL



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New Rochelle man convicted of sex crimes involving children sentenced to 21 years



Wearing blue in honor of Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month were members of the DA's Office Cyber Crimes, Sex Crimes and Domestic Violence bureaus, investigators and analysts from the Special Prosecutions and High Tech Crimes units, the New Rochelle Police Department, and the New York State Police with DA Rocah during the Apr. 4 press conference for the conclusion to *The People v. Jason Ricketts*

District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah

announced Apr. 4 that Jason Ricketts was sentenced to 21 years in state prison for sexual acts involving three children in Westchester County, as well as for the possession and creation of images and videos of children engaged in sexual acts, between 2019 and 2023.

The 23-year-old defendant, of New Rochelle, pleaded guilty on Jan. 29 to two counts of Course of Sexual Conduct Against a Child in the First Degree, Criminal Sexual Act in the Second Degree, and Promoting an Obscene Sexual Performance by a Child, all felonies.

The defendant appeared before New York State Supreme Court Judge James McCarty and was also sentenced to 20 years of post-release supervision. He is also required to register as a sex offender.

The defendant first met his victims in person at locations where children gather and befriended them by deceiving the children and their parents into believing that he was younger than he was. The defendant

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After years of preying upon children and inflicting unspeakable trauma on his victims, this defendant has been brought to justice and removed from our community. I thank the brave survivors for their courage in working with our Office, and the multiple agencies who partnered with us on this case to secure this conviction.
-DA Rocah
”

methodically gained the trust of his victims, even using substances with them before engaging in sexual acts with his victims, which he filmed. When the victims tried to leave or stop engaging, the defendant indicated that he would post the videos and images to social media accounts.

The sexual abuse began in 2019, when the victims were 12 years old, and continued until 2023.

The DA's Office Cyber Crimes Bureau and High Technology Crimes Unit launched an

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Message from DA Rocah

During April, we are commemorating Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month and also Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month.

Now is an important time to have necessary conversations about how we can keep our children and the most vulnerable safe—whether at home, in public or on the internet.

In addition to bringing perpetrators of sex crimes, child exploitation, or neglect and abuse, to justice, we partner with victim advocacy groups to empower survivors and provide valuable tools to families.

The Westchester DA's Office is dedicated to supporting victims and making educational outreach to the public to prevent abuse and sexual violence in our county, not just in April but year-round.

Miriam Rocah

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NOTABLE CASES

Asst. Commissioner of County Department of Health Charged

The DA's Office arrested Peter DeLucia, a Westchester County Department of Health Assistant Commissioner, on Mar. 20 and charged him with failing to disclose to the Westchester County Board of Ethics more than \$95,000 in income he received in checks, wire transfers and automatic bank transfers from an environmental health consulting firm in 2020, 2021, and 2022. As mandated by Westchester County, to help prevent conflicts of interest, certain employees, including the defendant, are required to file Annual Statements of Financial Disclosure with the County Board of Ethics disclosing the source and nature of any income in excess of \$1,000 related to any outside occupation, business or profession while employed by the County. The defendant allegedly received and deposited approximately \$14,000 in 2020, \$36,000 in 2021, and \$45,000 in 2022. The DA's Office learned of the allegations in Oct. 2023 and launched an investigation. **Senior ADA Renee Hassel**

Man Indicted for the Attempted Murder of Former Girlfriend

Ruben Santiago was charged in a 27-count indictment for forcibly entering the Sleepy Hollow home of his former girlfriend, in violation of an order of protection, and shooting her with a .38 revolver while young children were present. The victim, who suffered gunshot wounds to her neck and hand, was treated at an area hospital. The defendant is also charged with violating the order of protection on multiple occasions, including while he was in custody following his Jan. 3 arrest by the Sleepy Hollow Police Department. The investigation was conducted by the Sleepy Hollow PD, with assistance from the FBI's Westchester Safe Streets Task Force, Westchester County's Real Time Crime Center, the Greenburgh Drug and Alcohol Task Force, the NYPD, and the DA's Office. **Domestic Violence Bureau Chief Joyce Miller, Domestic Violence Deputy Bureau Chief Janelle Armentano, ADA Omar Youssef**

Three Sentenced to a Combined 31 Years for Ghost Gun Sales

Netaly Pena-Camilo, Jose Gregorio Olivo-Feliz and Pedro Junior Olivo-Feliz were sentenced to a combined 31 years in state prison for selling 31 un-serialized firearms - also known as ghost guns - and two conventional firearms on five separate occasions to undercover law enforcement agents after trafficking the illegal guns from Washington, D.C. to Yonkers in 2022. The joint investigation, which shut down an "Iron Pipeline" of illegal firearms, was initiated by the Yonkers Police Department's Narcotics Unit in partnership with the DEA, NYPD, New York State Police, the FBI, and the Violent Criminal Enterprise Bureau of the DA's Office. **ADA Rachel Ehrhardt, ADA Kevin Jones**

Former Finance Director Sentenced for Stealing from Non-Profit

Ingrid Aquino was sentenced on Jan. 25 to an indeterminate term of two to six years in state prison for stealing more than \$700,000 from Hudson Valley Community Services (HVCS), a Division of Cornerstone Family Healthcare, a non-profit healthcare provider in Hawthorne, where she was the Director of Finance. The defendant wrote approximately 170 checks totaling \$704,034 from the HVCS bank accounts for personal expenses, including rent, between Nov. 2017 and Sept. 2021. In addition to her sentence, the Court ordered the defendant to pay restitution in the amount of \$704,034.62. **Public Integrity and Law Enforcement Integrity Bureau**

Red Flag Laws Aid in Indicting Man for Illegal Gun Possession

Hani Saleh, of Elmsford, was indicted for the illegal possession of semi-automatic weapons, ammunition and gun paraphernalia, which were found in his car and seized from his home in accordance with an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO). It is alleged that the defendant, who had no permit to legally purchase or possess firearms in New York, was in possession of a semi-automatic firearm and a large capacity ammunition feeding device, also known as an extended magazine, containing 10. 40 caliber rounds of ammunition, which were found under the driver's seat of his vehicle in Oct. 2023. White Plains police apprehended the defendant after he was observed around White Plains driving his car, which was covered in writing and images, including nearly a dozen swastikas. Following the defendant's arrest, law enforcement secured an ERPO - a court order that temporarily removes firearms from any individual who poses a risk of harming themselves or others - and seized from his residence in Elmsford an additional rifle, three semi-automatic pistols, six extended magazines (five of which were loaded), and a silencer. White Plains police, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, the FBI's Westchester Safe Streets Task Force, and the DA's Office conducted the investigation. **ADA Brianna Ciuffi**

Brooklyn Man Indicted for Fatal Hit-And-Run in Hartsdale

Antonio Robles-Sanchez was indicted for allegedly, while under the influence of drugs, driving his Dodge Ram truck into a pedestrian who was standing on the sidewalk at the intersection of Rockledge Road and E. Harstdale Avenue in Hartsdale, and then left the scene. The victim was transported to White Plains Hospital where she was pronounced dead. The defendant is also charged with unlawfully possessing cocaine. The Greenburgh Police Department arrested the defendant in White Plains shortly after the incident, with the assistance of White Plains police. **Senior Trial Counsel Brian Bendish, ADA Timothy O'Hara**

Documented

NEW YORK'S GO-TO SOURCE FOR IMMIGRATION NEWS

Construction Labor

In Historic First, Construction Contractor Criminally Charged in Immigrant Worker's Death

The landmark indictment charges Michael Conway with a felony and two counts of reckless endangerment following the death of immigrant worker Jose Vega

AMIR KHAFAGY
FEB 28, 2024

When 46-year-old immigrant construction worker Jose Vega was killed on May 4, 2021, his death was another incident in the growing number of trench-related fatalities for the year.



WESTCHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY MIRIAM E. ROCAH CREDIT: DA OFFICE

But on Monday, Vega's death made history when a Westchester County Grand Jury indicted his supervisor, Michael Conway, 59, who was overseeing the construction site when Vega died.

The indictment, which comes after a 3-year investigation, marks the first time Westchester County has ever held an employer criminally responsible for the death of a worker. Conway is being charged with criminally negligent homicide, a felony, and two counts of reckless endangerment in the second degree, misdemeanors.

"For the first time in Westchester County, we are seeking to hold a contractor accountable for the death of a worker at a construction site that allegedly lacked proper safety measures," said Miriam E. Rocah, Westchester County district attorney.

Read the full story at bit.ly/documented228



New York must bolster its fights against the rise in hate crimes. Here's how

By Miriam E. Rocah and Catalina Blanco Buitrago Special to the USA TODAY Network

Published 10:34 a.m. ET Jan. 26, 2024

National, state and local crime data for 2023 indicate a dramatic rise in hate and bias crimes, especially involving victims of Jewish, Muslim, Asian and LGBTQ backgrounds. Communities are hurting and scared.

In reckoning with how we as a nation and as individual communities respond to growing hate and violence, our leaders must do all that we can. Gov. Kathy Hochul announced this week her unwavering support for the Hate Crimes Modernization Act, or HCMA, which I'm proud to endorse along with numerous lawmakers and district attorneys in New York.

While the state of New York already has robust hate crime laws in comparison to many other states, our laws have not always allowed prosecutors to charge a hate crime, even when hate is clearly present. This bill addresses some of the challenges prosecutors have seen in cases where some acts are unquestionably motivated by hate.

What will the HCMA do in New York?

The HCMA proposes expanding the list of eligible offenses in New York for prosecution as hate crimes, adding 31 new offenses including graffiti, gang assault, sexual abuse, jostling and falsely reporting an incident.

Read the full OpEd at bit.ly/nyhcma

IN THE COMMUNITY



Greenburgh Branch Chief Jamie Fair (top) and Public Integrity and Law Enforcement Integrity Bureau Senior ADA Renee Hassel (right) spent time reading to elementary school students on Feb. 7 for the annual World Read Aloud Day at Main Street School in the Irvington Union Free School District.



Senior ADA Catalina Blanco Buitrago, who leads out Hate Crimes Unit, joined the Westchester County Human Rights Commission on Feb. 20 at the Westchester County Center for a discussion on the differences between hate crimes, bias incidents and discrimination.

In a Feb. 1 public safety update following the District Attorney's Association of the State of New York's Winter Conference in New York City, DA Rocah joined Governor Kathy Hochul and Queens DA Melinda Katz, Erie County DA John Flynn, New York State Police Superintendent Steven James and Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez to discuss how the Westchester DA's Office is partnering with the state to combat hate crimes.



New Rochelle Bureau Chief Craig Ascher (speaking at podium, right), joined by ADAs Tai White (far left) and Lily Zeqaj (far right, photo on left), attended the Opportunity Youth Part's Orientation at New Rochelle City Court on Jan. 26, and spoke about the role of the DA's Office and working with facilitators and program directors from Choice of New York and the Center for Justice Innovation's New Rochelle Community Center.



Chief Assistant District Attorney Amy Finzi (top, far left) joined district attorneys from Queens, Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island along with an Assistant U.S. Attorney (DOJ) and an executive member from the Brooklyn DA's Office for the National Black Prosecutor's Association's (NBPA)'s Career Pathways to NYS Prosecution panel at the Manhattan DA's Office on Mar. 13. ADA Davida Hawkes (right), the Westchester County representative for NBPA's Sterling Johnson New York Chapter, with ADA Ayanna Walthall Murphy (far right) greeted attendees during the networking and recruitment event following the panel.



Senior Assistant District Attorney Livia Rodriguez (right) attended a college and career expo at Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls in the Bronx on Mar. 28.



Teenagers aged 13 to 19 had the opportunity to meet Deputy Chief Criminal Investigator Wade Hardy (2nd from left) during the Career Exploration Event on Mar. 1 hosted by the Dayspring Community Center in Yonkers.



ADA Omar Youssef (right) speaks to a student during his visit to a career day event at Gorton High School in Yonkers.

Honoring Black History Month

In honor of Black History Month, the DA's Office new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee hosted on Feb. 12 a screening of acclaimed director Ava DuVernay's documentary "13th," which explores the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the United States.

The screening was attended by members of the DA's Office and was followed by a discussion on racial inequity and bias in prosecution with civil rights attorney and former Westchester Assistant District Attorney Mayo Bartlett (pictured, second from right).

ADA Ayanna Walthall Murphy (left) and Deputy DA Shameika Mathurin (far right) with DA Rocah and Mr. Bartlett.



Sentencing of Jason Ricketts

(continued from Page 1)

investigation in October 2022 after Dropbox Inc., a file hosting service, filed a CyberTipline Report with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) about an uploaded video file containing minors engaged in sexual acts.

Upon receiving NCMEC's notification, the New York State Police developed a suspect in Westchester County and the DA's Office obtained a search warrant in January 2023 for the defendant's residence in New Rochelle. With assistance from the New Rochelle Police Department, the DA's Office investigators seized multiple devices from the defendant's home. The defendant admitted to using Dropbox.

Now is an important time to have necessary conversations about how we can keep our children and the most vulnerable safe—whether at home, in public or on the internet.

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The DA's Office arrested the defendant on Feb. 2, 2023, and seized an additional device, which revealed internet searches regarding how to remotely wipe devices, whether a person's age can be determined through a video, and attorneys who specialize in defending individuals charged with sex offenses.

John Shehan, Senior Vice President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) Exploited Children Division & International Engagement said: "In 2023, NCMEC received more than 36 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation and made them available to law enforcement. The staggering volume of reports underscores the pressing need for ongoing collaboration in a shared mission to safeguard children and ensure a safer online



"The collaborative efforts between multiple agencies in Westchester County have culminated in the successful arrest and prosecution of Jason Ricketts, who has been sentenced to 21 years in prison. This outcome reflects the dedication and synergy of our law enforcement community in upholding justice and safeguarding our neighborhoods."

*-Robert Gazzola, Commissioner
New Rochelle Police Department*



environment. NCMEC applauds the relentless efforts of the Westchester County District Attorney's Office and collaborating law enforcement agencies for their hard work on this case and commends the bravery of the survivors who have courageously come forward."

Steven G. James, New York State Police Superintendent said: "Mr. Ricketts had no regard for the wellbeing of the victims in this case. The evidence gathered, and work done by the New York State Police and our law enforcement partners, ensures the defendant will serve time for his deplorable acts. We have zero tolerance for those who prey on innocent children. This sentencing reflects the severity of the crimes committed and our commitment to finding justice for our most vulnerable victims."

Anyone who may have been victimized or may have information about other possible victims of the defendant can contact the DA's Office Special Prosecutions Division directly at (914) 995-3000. Language assistance is available.

The case was prosecuted by Cyber Crimes Bureau Chief Laura Forbes of the Trials and Investigations Division, Domestic Violence Deputy Bureau Chief Janelle Armentano and Sex Crimes Bureau Senior Assistant District Attorney Mollie O'Rourke, both of the Special Prosecutions Division.

To view the press conference, visit: [youtube.com/@westchester.da](https://www.youtube.com/@westchester.da).

April is Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention and Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month

The DA's Office is proud to join the #ISayNoMore to sexual abuse movement and support the third annual walk against sexual abuse of children on Apr. 27, organized by Yo Digo No Más, the Yonkers-based victim support and advocacy group. The less-than-a-mile walk will begin at the fountain in front of Yonkers City Hall located at 40 South Broadway. Staff from the DA's Office's Special Prosecutions Division will be participating at the information and resources fair following the walk. For more information, visit yodigonomas.com

If you or someone you know needs assistance, contact the DA's Office Special Prosecutions Division's Child Abuse Bureau, Domestic Violence Bureau or Sex Crime Bureau at (914)995-3000. Bi-lingual assistance is available. For emergencies call 911.

Who to Call for Assistance



WESTCHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Special Prosecutions Division
Child Abuse, Elder Abuse,
Domestic Violence, Sex Crimes
(914) 995-3000

Se habla Español.
Language assistance is available.

3rd Annual WALK AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE
Of our Children

SAVE THE DATE

April 27 2024

STARTS 11 AM
Yonkers City Hall Unity Fountain
40 South Broadway, Yonkers, NY 10701

Sponsors: Yodigo NO MAS, YONKERS, GOVA



CAREERS

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The District Attorney's Office has career opportunities for attorneys, criminal investigators and civil service support staff.

The Office is actively recruiting a staff that reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

Applicants of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Open positions are listed online at <https://www.westchesterda.net/careers>

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK
Office of the District Attorney
Miriam E. Rocah

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Safety. Accountability. Integrity. Justice

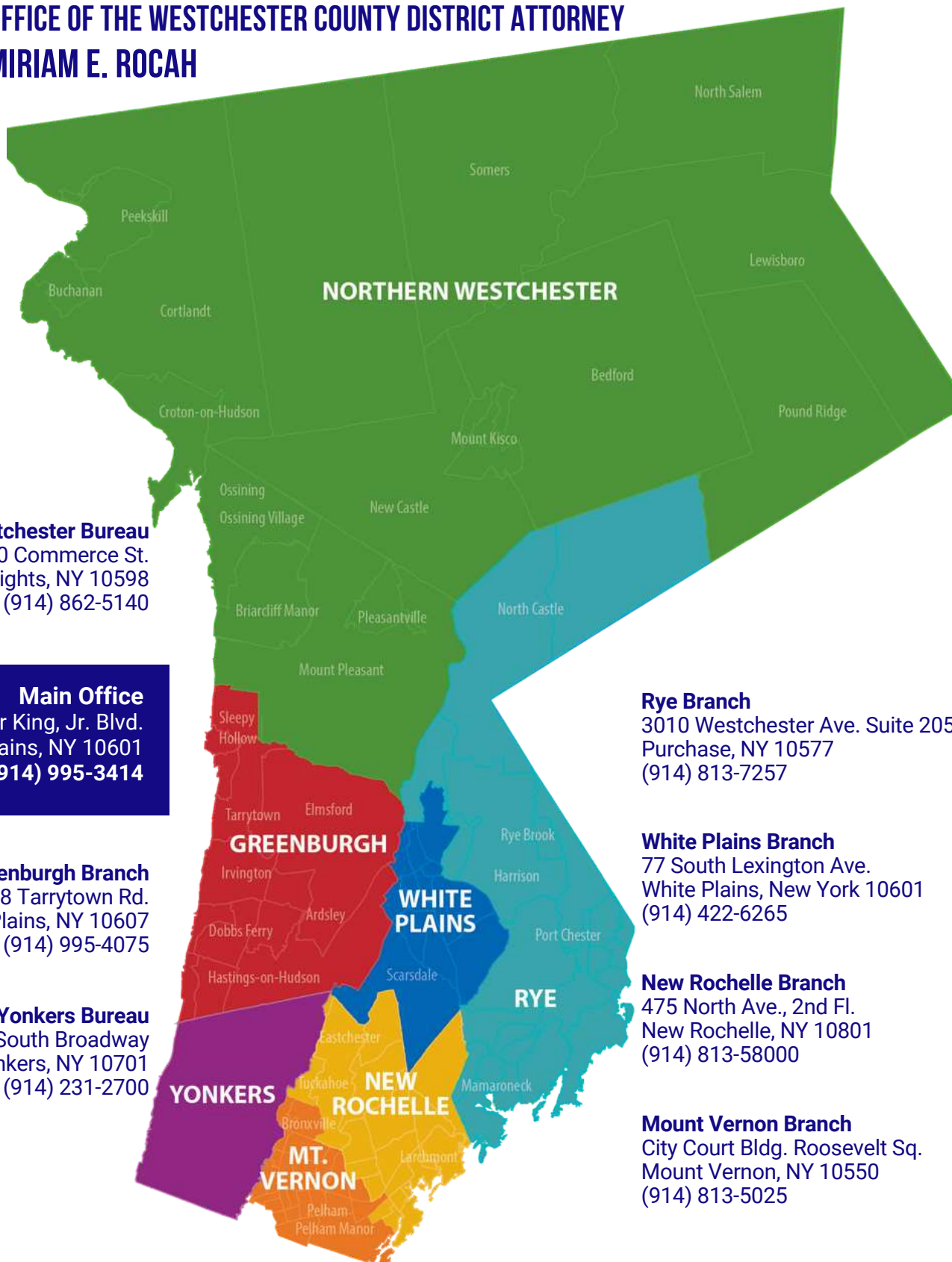
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- Leadership
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- Conviction Integrity
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(914) 813-5025

The public can file a complaint directly with the DA's Office by phone or online

(914) 995-TIPS (8477)

www.WestchesterDA.net

For emergencies, please call 911