

NY state agency accused of allowing sexual harassment for years: report

BY JOHN BOWDEN - 03/01/19 08:15 AM EST



Several state employees with a New York disability agency say that supervisors and coworkers at the small office did nothing to stop a male administrative assistant who frequently sexually harassed women in the office, including exposing himself and making obscene comments.

The Associated Press reports that New York's Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) has been roiled by scandal that has forced the administrative assistant accused by multiple women of sexual misconduct to be suspended following his arrest for threats of sexual assault.

Multiple women interviewed by the news service described accounts of inappropriate comments and behavior by Chad Dominie, the accused assistant, while one woman went on the record to detail her account of Dominie threatening to sexually assault her in the office.

“Not one person protected me,” said state employee Mary Tromblee, who the AP reports took out a restraining order and filed harassment charges against Dominie. “I want people to know you can stand up for yourself.”

Two other women say Dominie regularly exposed himself or made lewd comments about their appearances at work.

“It got to a point where I stopped caring what I look like. I stopped doing my makeup, doing my hair. I gained a lot of weight,” one woman told the news outlet. “I would wake up every day thinking ‘what can I do to stop him from bothering me today?’ ”

Dominie denied the allegations in an interview with the AP while acknowledging that he engaged in "locker room" behavior, adding of a coworker: “I tell her to ‘shut her whore mouth’ and I’m the big villain?”

Dominie also admitted to viewing pornography in the office and purchasing marijuana for his supervisors in the AP interview, and defended his conduct as inoffensive.

“I was never offended by it,” he said. “I’m an old Marine. It was a joke. We were just horseplaying.”

The agency defended its actions on Friday, telling the AP in a statement that it suspended Dominie when supervisors first learned of the allegations.

“Upon learning of the allegations, OPWDD immediately reported the incident to law enforcement and the accused employee was placed on administrative leave,” the agency said. The statement added that unnamed employees involved in the matter were “appropriately disciplined” and counseled, though it declined to offer details.