

Nurse says he was nearly killed by patient on Staten Island: 'I don't remember the day that changed my life'

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Peter Shiffman was making his usual rounds at the South Beach Psychiatric Center when, authorities say, an out-of-control resident turned Shiffman's routine into calamity.

Shiffman, a nurse supervisor at the facility who had [dedicated his life to mental health care](#), nearly died, he recalled.

According to Shiffman, on the morning of Sept. 17, 2024, he suffered two skull fractures and three hemorrhagic strokes that [changed his life](#).

He fell into a coma as a result, he said.

When he awoke weeks later, he said he had no memory of the attack nor the person who assaulted him.

The injuries left him with permanent brain damage, chronic pain, and severe memory loss, he said.

"I don't remember the day that changed my life," said Shiffman.

Leonddis Jeffrey, 37, was arrested by police shortly after the violent attack. Jeffrey, has been charged with assault in the second and third degrees and second degree harassment.

According to a criminal complaint obtained by the Advance/SILive.com, Jeffrey allegedly punched Shiffman in the face, causing him to fall backwards and hit his head on the ground. The complaint lists injuries that include brain bleeds.

Shiffman, 58, believes his attacker should have never been placed in a civilian psychiatric facility.

"The Office of Mental Health had an initial responsibility to take care of people living with mental illness and help them get back into society," he said. "The office has lost that focus over the last 10 years."

According to Shiffman, the ordeal has taken a toll on his family both financially and emotionally.

"My father has been left to suffer quietly. We are speaking



Ten months after suffering skull fractures and strokes, Peter Shiffman faces ongoing workers' compensation battles while his family raises funds for medical expenses. Courtesy of Allison Shiffman

up not only to fight for him, but to fight for every other New York State healthcare worker still showing up to do the job," said Shiffman's daughter, Allison, on a GoFundMe she created to help offset her father's mounting medical bills. "If this can happen to someone like my dad — a registered nurse, an advocate, a union steward — then it can happen to anyone."

As of Friday, the family had raised over \$15,000 of their \$35,000 goal.

Fighting for care

Now, despite his life-altering injuries, Shiffman says he has faced repeated denials and delays in receiving medical care through workers' compensation.

His attempts to get necessary procedures, like a spinal ablation, have been repeatedly denied due to bureaucratic roadblocks and what he believes are cost-saving tactics, he said.

"I'm in brutal, brutal pain," he says. "And they keep saying no based on technicalities."

Despite these challenges, Shiffman refuses to give up, determined to ensure his story will not be forgotten.

"As a registered nurse in New York state, it gives me the sense that I've essentially been thrown in the garbage because workers compensation doesn't fit me," Shiffman said. "The reality is I have somewhat been thrown in the garbage, so my focus on what is most important: That my family is never forgotten by New York state."

The assault

Jeffrey's bail was set at \$500,000 cash or \$1.5 million bond. He was remanded to jail, according to the Richmond County District Attorney's Office.

In a statement to the Advance/SILive.com, the New York City's Office of Mental Health said: "The Office of Mental Health has a zero-tolerance policy toward violence in our programs and we take very seriously any assault on our staff or patients. As such, we continuously evaluate and strengthen our policies and practices to bolster safety, using well-tested evidence-based approaches. When incidents do occur, we use them as an opportunity to learn and to improve our agency's approach toward safety."

According to a source familiar with The Office of Mental Health's policies, when a violent incident occurs an internal review is conducted and preventive measures such as staff retraining, policy revisions or adjusting staffing levels is implemented.

The incident led to updates in violence risk assessment protocols, emergency response training, and mock preparedness drills at the psychiatric center.



Peter Shiffman pictured with his family before the September assault.
Courtesy of Allison Shiffman

According to the source, ongoing safety concerns prompted the facility to create critical response teams, enhance alarm systems, and providing specialized training for staff working with criminal justice involved patients. The center also plans to develop a new intensive treatment unit for patients with violent behaviors.

Those interested in learning more about Shiffman's GoFundMe can visit the website at gofundme.com and search "Support Pete- Violent Assault at NYS Psychiatric Facility."