



BCPO News

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Camden Drug Dealer Pleads Guilty to Causing Death of Customer

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a 23-year-old Camden drug dealer pled guilty in Superior Court to causing the death of a customer to whom he sold fentanyl-laced cocaine during the summer of 2019.

Marquese Smith, of Baird Boulevard, pled guilty May 13 to one count of Strict Liability for Drug-Induced Death (First Degree). Under a plea agreement with the Prosecutor's Office, Smith faces eight years in prison when sentenced August 12. He will not become eligible for parole until 85 percent of the term has been served.

The investigation began in June 2019 when officers from the Maple Shade Police Department responded to the Ryan Run West Apartment Complex and discovered the body of 33-year-old Kristi Ventura, who had fatally overdosed.

The Burlington County Medical Examiner's Office concluded the cause of death was cocaine and fentanyl toxicity.

The investigation determined that the drugs used by the victim had been purchased from Smith, who has been lodged in the Burlington County Jail in Mount Holly since his arrest in October 2019.

Smith is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Jeremy Lackey and Assistant Prosecutor Michael Angermeier, supervisor of the BCPO Gang, Gun and Narcotics Task Force (GGNTF). The investigation was conducted by the Maple Shade Police Department and the BCPO GGNTF.

Since 2017, there have been 26 defendants charged in Burlington County with Strict Liability for Drug-Induced Death. Eleven have been convicted or pled guilty, and another three have been indicted. The remaining cases are pending presentation to a grand jury.

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