



# **BCPO News**

**Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor**



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## **Drug Dealer Receives Lengthy Sentence for Fatal Overdose of Customer**

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a Pemberton Township drug dealer was sentenced yesterday to 25 years in New Jersey state prison for causing the death of a customer who bought fentanyl-laced heroin from him in 2017.

The sentence was handed down to Bryant Taylor, 42, by the Hon. Gerard H. Breland, J.S.C. Taylor must serve 85 percent of the term before becoming eligible for parole.

“In addition to basing this significant sentence on finding the defendant to be a persistent offender, we are gratified the Court emphasized the need for deterrence in the midst of the ongoing drug addiction crisis,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “Fentanyl is a deadly poison, responsible for the majority of the nearly 100,000 overdose deaths in our country last year. Dealing fentanyl demonstrates extreme recklessness, and a resulting death is entirely foreseeable. This sentence should reinforce the message to dealers that they will pay a steep price in Burlington County if their drugs kill the person they are selling it to.”

A Superior Court jury convicted Taylor in August on charges of Strict Liability for Drug-Induced Death (First Degree), two counts of Distribution of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (Third Degree), two counts of Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (Third Degree), two counts of Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance with Intent to Distribute (Third Degree) and Witness Tampering (Third Degree).

In addition to the 25-year term on the Drug-Induced Death charge, the court also sentenced Taylor to consecutive five-year sentences for the drug distribution and witness tampering offenses. The sentences will run consecutively, bringing the total period of incarceration to 35 years.

The investigation began June 18, 2017, after Pemberton Township police officers were called to the Wawa convenience store on Arney's Mount Road for a report of an unresponsive male on the men's bathroom floor. Shane Cullens, 26, of Pemberton Township, was rushed to a hospital and died two days later without ever regaining consciousness.

Burlington County Medical Examiner Dr. Ian Hood concluded the cause of death was heroin and fentanyl toxicity. The investigation determined the drugs that caused the fatal overdose had been purchased from Taylor.

The case was prosecuted by former BCPO Assistant Prosecutor Jeremy Lackey and Assistant Prosecutor Melissa O'Mara. The investigation was conducted by the Pemberton Township Police Department, with assistance from the BCPO High-Tech Crimes Unit. The lead investigator was BCPO Detective Sergeant Danielle Hann.

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