



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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FORMER CLINTON CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEE SENTENCED TO JAIL FOR AN ILLICIT RELATIONSHIP WITH AND PROVIDING CONTRABAND TO AN INMATE

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the sentencing to jail of a former Clinton Correctional Facility civilian employee for having an illicit relationship with and providing contraband to an inmate, similar to the actions that led to the 2015 escape of two convicted murderers from the facility.

Denise Prell, 39, of Plattsburgh, a former civilian tailor shop supervisor at the Clinton Correctional Facility, was sentenced today in Clinton County Court to one year in jail (23 concurrent one-year sentences) and \$13,250 in fines and fees for her August guilty plea to Promoting Prison Contraband in the Second Degree, 23 counts of Official Misconduct, and one count of Sexual Abuse in the Third Degree, misdemeanors.

Notably, Prell's improper actions came less than two years after two convicted murderers escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility with the help of tailor shop employee Joyce Mitchell, who was arrested and convicted in 2015 for having illicit intimate relationships with the pair and providing them with the tools and resources they used to escape, leading to a three-week manhunt throughout the Adirondacks.

“Against any sense of reason, this defendant recklessly ignored the region's most notorious events in years and engaged in the same types of actions that enabled two killers to escape from prison and terrorize the north country for weeks,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “Her actions were a shameful blow to the many Clinton Correctional employees who ceaselessly work to maintain a secure facility and safe community. Thankfully, the reforms and training that took place since the escape helped swiftly bring this former employee's actions to light and bring her to justice.”

In the wake of Inspector General Leahy Scott's investigation and [report](#) of the June 2015 escape of inmates David Sweat and Richard Matt, which found that complacency among staff and lax and deficient policies and supervision also helped facilitate the escape, the Inspector General has worked closely with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to ensure that recommended corrective measures were implemented.

During the ongoing monitoring of DOCCS facilities in 2017, a staff member at Clinton Correctional properly reported allegations to DOCCS's internal affairs unit, the Office of Special Investigations, regarding Prell's improper relationship. A subsequent investigation found that Prell was involved in a romantic relationship with an inmate and smuggling contraband and cash into the prison for him. Subsequently, DOCCS referred the matter to the New York State Police and Inspector General Leahy Scott for further [investigation](#). In late 2017, Prell – who used a fictitious alias and a prepaid cellular phone to conceal her relationship – was arrested on numerous criminal charges related to her actions in the prison. She was also terminated from her position.

Given the similarities between former Clinton Correctional tailor shop employee Joyce Mitchell's actions assisting the 2015 escape, and subsequent actions by former Clinton Correctional tailor shop employee Denise Prell, Inspector General Leahy Scott reiterated her recommendation that all civilian staff receive mandatory core training, including training on recognizing and reporting inmate manipulation, prior to commencing employment. The Inspector General also recommends DOCCS increase its minimum staffing at the Clinton Correctional tailor shop and remove unused barriers that obstruct lines of sight throughout the shop.

DOCCS has accepted and agreed to implement all of the Inspector General's recommendations.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision for its assistance on the investigation, the New York State Police for its work on the investigation and arrest of Denise Prell, and Clinton County District Attorney Andrew J. Wiley and his office for prosecuting Prell.

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