

# Office of the Hunterdon County Prosecutor

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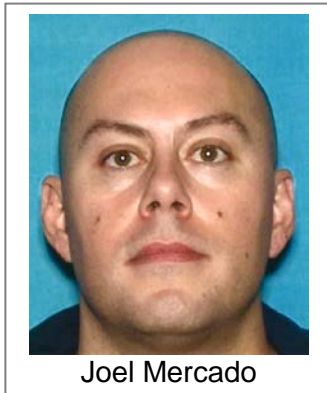
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## **MEDIA RELEASE – AUGUST 12, 2017**

### **NJ D.O.C. OFFICER INDICTED FOR OFFICIAL MISCONDUCT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**



Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns, III, announced the indictment of Joel Mercado, age 36, of Lyndhurst, NJ. On August 17, 2017, Mr. Mercado was indicted by a Hunterdon County Grand Jury on two counts of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Official Misconduct, three counts of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Sexual Assault, and one count of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Pattern of Official Misconduct.

According to Prosecutor Kearns, “On May 24, 2017, Mr. Mercado was arrested and charged with two counts of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Official Misconduct and two counts of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Sexual Assault. Mr. Mercado was employed as a Senior Correction Officer for the New Jersey Department of Corrections at the time of the arrest. The joint investigation revealed that Mr. Mercado engaged in a sexual relationship with two different inmates at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in Union Township. Mercado is a ten year veteran of the NJ Department of Corrections.”

Prosecutor Kearns added, “The Hunterdon County Prosecutor’s Office remains committed to aggressively investigating all suspected violations of our criminal code, with priority given to crimes of this nature. All inmates have a right to be safe within the institutions where we as a society demand they be detained. It is our responsibility to ensure that public servants, who betray their oath, and the public trust, are held accountable and prosecuted to fullest extent of the law.”

The filing of a criminal complaint is merely a step in the criminal justice process. The defendant is presumed innocent until the matter is resolved in a court of law.

Anonymous tips can be submitted by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-321-0010 or by going to [www.crimestoppershunterdon.com](http://www.crimestoppershunterdon.com), or text messaging “HCTIPS” plus your tip message to 274637 (CRIMES). Tipsters can also download the free mobile app “Tipsubmit” and select Hunterdon County to submit anonymous tips via text messaging. All tips are anonymous and kept confidential.

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