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Ohio: Ex-prison guard convicted of assaulting teenage inmate

Dana Wilson, THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

DELAWARE, OHIO

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DELAWARE, Ohio -- A former juvenile-prison guard could spend up to a year behind bars after a judge yesterday convicted him of assaulting a female inmate.

Stanley Gates, 38, of Columbus, entered an Alford plea in Delaware County Common Pleas Court to assault and falsification charges. The plea means Gates denies guilt but acknowledges prosecutors had enough evidence to convict him.

Gates told the judge, "I'm just ready to get this over with and get on with my life."

He avoided a jury trial scheduled for this week by reaching a plea agreement. He had been indicted on 10 charges, including four counts of obstructing justice, three counts of endangering children, and one count each of felonious assault, intimidation and intimidation of a witness.

Seven of the 10 charges were dismissed as part of the agreement, and the two charges he pleaded to were reduced to misdemeanors.

Gates is one of 12 state prison-system employees charged in 2004 and 2005 with felony counts of abusing and endangering inmates. Four of the cases, including Gates', still are pending in court.

Gates was fired in May 2004 from his job with the Ohio Department of Youth Services. He had worked as a corrections officer at the Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility in Delaware.

Assistant Prosecutor Paul Scarsella told the judge that on Dec. 27, 2003, Gates had an altercation with a female inmate and struck her, puncturing her eardrum.

When questioned by State Highway Patrol investigators about the incident, Gates gave false and misleading information, Scarsella said.

He added that the victim and another corrections officer who witnessed the incident would have testified if the case had gone to trial.

Gates is scheduled to be sentenced April 26.

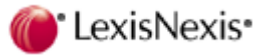
Three former prison guards -- Andrew Baker, Timothy McWilson and Robert Reynolds -- are scheduled for trial this year.

In recent months, Judge W. Duncan Whitney has dismissed cases against current prison employees David L. James, Cinda Thacker, Timothy Underdown and former employee Dawne Franklin.

Three others -- Cardinal Paige, Tanya Serrell and Charla Blair -- pleaded guilty to their charges last year. Paige and Blair resigned. Serrell returned to work, department spokeswoman Andrea Kruse said.

Tommie L. Woods resumed work for the department after he was acquitted on charges of assaulting a teenage inmate.

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