



# SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

## SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR

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### **Akron Man Sentenced to LIFE IN PRISON for Several Rapes**

AKRON, Ohio (Tuesday, May 25, 2021) – Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Alison McCarty sentenced Prentice Smith, 45, of Anderson Avenue in Akron, to LIFE IN PRISON after Smith was found guilty of raping several women over a number of years.

Smith will not be eligible for parole until he has served 81 years of his sentence.

Judge McCarty found Smith guilty of being a Sexually Violent Predator. The Sexually Violent Predator specification added additional time to Smith's sentence which must be served consecutively.

Judge McCarty also designated Smith a Tier III sex offender. If Smith is released from prison, he will have to register with the local sheriff's office every 90 days for the rest of his life.

On May 14, 2021, a Summit County jury found Smith guilty of the following charges:

- 5 Counts of Rape – Felonies of 1<sup>st</sup> Degree
- 4 Counts of Kidnapping – Felonies of 1<sup>st</sup> Degree

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“Thank you to everyone who helped bring Prentice Smith to justice. My hope is that this also brings a sense of relief and closure for the survivors of his assaults. They showed tremendous strength as they faced Smith when they testified,” said Prosecutor Walsh. “My office will continue to fight for survivors of sexual assault. We are a proponent of the “Start By Believing” campaign which helps build a foundation of belief and support for survivors of sexual assault in the hopes that more survivors will come forward and report what happened.”

Smith was found guilty in connection with four separate rapes.

In January of 2011, Prentice Smith forced the victim in his car by gunpoint. Smith drove to an empty parking lot where he raped the woman.

In March of 2015, Smith pulled up next to a woman and offered her a ride. Smith then drove the woman to a vacant parking lot and parked next to a building to prevent the woman from opening the door. Smith then beat and raped the woman.

In May of 2015, Smith pulled his car up to the victim and offered her a ride. Smith parked in a vacant parking lot next to a building and prevented the woman from opening the car. Smith then beat and raped the woman.

On December 25, 2018, pulled up next to a woman and offered her a ride. Smith drove to a vacant parking lot and parked close to a building to prevent the victim from getting out. Smith then raped the woman.

DNA was collected from the crime scenes which eventually matched Prentice Smith. Smith was arrested in June of 2019.

This is the first trial in Summit County involving the recently created Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit (SAKI). In 2018, the Akron Police Department received a three-year, one-million dollar grant from the Department of Justice to form the SAKI Unit. The Akron Sexual Assault Kit Initiative reviews unsolved rape cases less than 20 years old where DNA was collected but no suspect was charged with a crime. The Akron SAKI unit is made up of three Summit County Prosecutor’s Office employees, three Akron Police Department detectives, and members of the Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties, and the Summit County Victim Assistance Program.