

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

James A. Primus, #252315, )  
)  
Appellant, )  
)  
v. )  
)  
South Carolina Department of Corrections, )  
)  
Respondent. )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Docket No.: 21-ALJ-04-0165-AP

FINAL ORDER

RECEIVED

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SC Court of Appeals

This matter is before the South Carolina Administrative Law Court (ALC or court) pursuant to the Notice of Appeal filed by James A. Primus (Appellant), an inmate in the custody of the South Carolina Department of Corrections (Respondent or Department). After the Appellant's Step 1 and Step 2 Grievances were denied, the Appellant filed a Notice of Appeal with this court on April 21, 2021. The Appellant is appealing the Department's denial of his grievance in which the Appellant alleges that the Department has not applied any time jail credit to his kidnapping conviction sentence.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The court's jurisdiction to hear this matter is derived from the decision of the South Carolina Supreme Court in *Al-Shabazz v. State*, 338 S.C. 354, 527 S.E.2d 742 (2000). The *Al-Shabazz* decision explained that "procedural due process is guaranteed when an inmate is deprived of an interest encompassed by the Fourteenth Amendment's protection of liberty and property." *Wicker v. S.C. Dep't of Corrs.*, 360 S.C. 421, 424, 602 S.E.2d 56, 58 (2004) (citation omitted). Such a liberty interest is at stake in the calculation of an inmate's sentence. *Tant v. S.C. Dep't of Corrs.*, 408 S.C. 334, 341, 759 S.E.2d 398, 401 (2014) (citation omitted) ("There can be no doubt the length of an inmate's incarceration implicates a constitutional liberty interest."); see also *Sullivan v. S.C. Dep't of Corrs.*, 355 S.C. 437, 441-42, 586 S.E.2d 124, 126 (2003) (quoting *Al-Shabazz*, 338 S.C. at 369, 527 S.E.2d at 750) (recognizing that *Al-Shabazz* created review in the ALC for sentence calculation cases).

In sentence calculation cases, the court sits in an appellate capacity, applying the appellate standard of the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). *Al-Shabazz*, 338 S.C. at 377-80, 527 S.E.2d

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at 754–56. Consequently, the court’s review is limited to the record. S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-380(4). Additionally, the court may not substitute its judgment for the judgment of the agency as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact but may modify or reverse the decision of the agency when substantial rights of the appellant have been prejudiced. S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-380(5). Substantial rights of the appellant are prejudiced when the agency’s decision, including the agency’s findings, inferences, and conclusions, are in violation of constitutional or statutory provisions; in excess of the statutory authority of the agency; made upon unlawful procedure; affected by other error of law; clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the whole record; or arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of discretion. *Id.*

### DISCUSSION

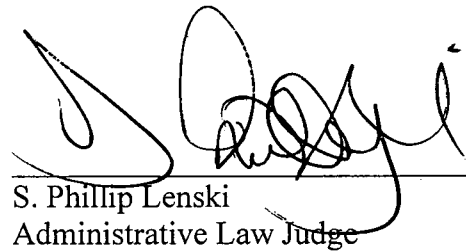
The Appellant claims that the Department has failed to apply any jail time credits to his kidnapping sentence when it is stated on his sentencing sheet that he is to get credit for jail time. On September 1, 1998, the Appellant was sentenced to thirty (30) years for Kidnapping and ten (10) years for Assault and Battery of a High and Aggravated Nature (ABHAN) to run consecutive to the Appellant’s thirty-year sentence for Kidnapping. On the Appellant’s sentencing sheet for the ABHAN conviction, the sentencing judge also wrote that the Appellant was to get “credit for jail time since July 15, 1997.” On the Appellant’s sentencing sheet for the kidnapping conviction, the sentencing judge wrote “credit for jail time since July 15, 1998.” However, this date was amended and the “1998” scratched out and the year “1997” is written under it, circled, and initialed.

The Department explained that because the Appellant’s sentencing judge wrote on his sentencing sheets that the Appellant is entitled to jail time credit beginning on July 15, 1997, the Department gave the Appellant this credit by entering his sentence start date as July 15, 1997, rather than entering a particular number of days on the jail time credit line. The Appellant was sentenced on September 1, 1998, therefore, by starting the Appellant’s sentence on July 15, 1997 rather than September 1, 1998, the Department has applied the Appellant’s jail time credit to his sentence.

The record in this case establishes that the Department’s decision is supported by substantial evidence and that the Appellant has failed to prove that the Department’s decision is clearly erroneous, or arbitrary or capricious, or an abuse of discretion. When reviewing the

Department's decisions in inmate grievance matters, the court sits in an appellate capacity. Consequently, the review in inmate grievance cases is limited to the Record presented. An Administrative Law Judge may not substitute their judgment for that of an agency "as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact." S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-380(5). In the case at hand, the court will not substitute its judgment for that of the agency because there is substantial evidence to support the Department's assertion that the Appellant has been awarded all of the jail time credit to which he is entitled. Based upon the foregoing,

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** the decision of the Department is **AFFIRMED**.  
**AND IT IS SO ORDERED.**

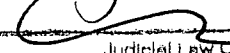
  
S. Phillip Lenski  
Administrative Law Judge

November 5, 2021  
Columbia, South Carolina

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

This is to certify that the undersigned has this date served this order in the above entitled action upon all parties to this cause by depositing a copy hereof, in the United States Mail, postage paid, or in the Interagency Mail Service addressed to the party(ies) or their attorney(s).

This 5<sup>th</sup> day of November 2021

  
Judicial Law Clerk