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## JOINT INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARREST IN WEST PALM BEACH



Contact:

Communications Office

[NewsMedia@flhealth.gov](mailto:NewsMedia@flhealth.gov)

850-245-4111

**Tallahassee, Fla.**—The Florida Department of Health’s Unlicensed Activity (ULA) Jupiter Office announced that their joint investigation with the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office has led to the arrest of Rita V. Bitton for the unlicensed practice as a dental hygienist, which is a third degree felony and punishable by up to one year in jail.

The joint operation was conducted by Florida Department of Health investigators and agents from the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office. Bitton is not licensed in the state of Florida to practice as a dental hygienist and was taken into custody by the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office for practicing the profession without being properly licensed. In addition, the Florida Department of Health issued Bitton a notice to cease and desist for practicing as a dental hygienist without being duly licensed.

Consumers are encouraged to use the department’s website [www.flhealthsource.gov](http://www.flhealthsource.gov) where they can conveniently view the license information of their health care professional. Complaints may be filed anonymously by completing and mailing the complaint form on the Florida Department of Health’s website, calling 1-877-HALT-ULA, or emailing [HALTULA@flhealth.gov](mailto:HALTULA@flhealth.gov).

The department’s Division of Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) investigates and refers for prosecution all unlicensed health care activity complaints and allegations. The ULA Unit works in conjunction with law enforcement and the state attorney’s offices to prosecute individuals practicing without a license. In many instances, unlicensed activity is a felony level criminal offense. More importantly, receiving health care from unlicensed people is dangerous and could result in further injury, disease or even death.

Working in conjunction with 22 boards and six councils, MQA regulates seven types of facilities and 200-plus license types in more than 40 health care professions. MQA evaluates the credentials of all applicants for licensure, issues licenses, analyzes and investigates complaints, inspects facilities, assists in prosecuting practice act violations, combats unlicensed activity and provides credential and discipline history about licensees to the public. Visit: [www.flhealthsource.gov](http://www.flhealthsource.gov) for additional information about MQA.

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The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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