

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



SUSAN K. TREADAWAY
District Attorney

Cherokee County Justice Center
90 North Street, Suite 390
Canton, GA 30114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prison Ordered for Man Convicted of Abusing a Child with Special Needs
State vs. Tyler James Sponge

October 29, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on Wednesday, October 16, Superior Court Judge Tony Baker sentenced Tyler James Sponge, 38, to serve 17 years in prison for cruelty to children in the first degree, aggravated battery, and battery.

Sponge was convicted of these charges following a jury trial that ended with a guilty verdict on August 15.

Charges stem from an incident that occurred on February 10, 2021. On that date, a nurse at Kennestone Hospital reported possible child abuse involving a three-year-old child. Medical staff stated that the child had a buckle fracture of her right femur, two bite marks on her shoulder, a bite mark on her ankle, petechiae under her left arm, and bruising on her arms, legs, and right eye.

Canton Police officers determined that the child had been left alone with the defendant while the mother was at work. The mother sought medical assistance when she realized the child was injured. Since the child is nonverbal and deaf, she was unable to tell law enforcement who caused her injuries. For this reason, investigators used forensics to determine that male DNA was present in the saliva on the bite marks left by the defendant on her body.

The trial took place from August 13-15, ending with a guilty verdict on all charges. The State presented evidence that Sponge had harmed the little girl on other occasions over the last two years and had also committed child abuse on a different child more than 10 years ago. Ten witnesses testified, including law enforcement officers, medical professionals, a forensic biologist, DFCS personnel, and an expert in pediatrics and child abuse. The State also presented 29 exhibits.

“This little girl was deaf, nonverbal, and completely reliant on others. Rather than protecting and caring for her, this defendant exploited her vulnerabilities and defenselessness,” said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Hines, of the Special Victims Unit, Office of the District Attorney. “Fortunately, medical professionals recognized signs of child abuse and alerted law enforcement, saving her from further abuse.”

During the sentencing hearing on October 16, the State argued for a sentence of 40 years with the first 20 years to serve in prison. The Defense recommended a sentence of straight probation with credit for time served.

Judge Baker sentenced Sponge to 37 years with the first 17 years to be served in confinement and the remainder to be served on probation. For the entirety of his sentence, Sponge is forbidden to have contact with the victim or with any child under the age of 18.

“It shocks the conscience to imagine the horrific abuse this innocent little girl suffered, made especially heinous when considering her inability to verbalize what was happening to her,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “This sentence protects the victim and all children from further abuse at the hands of this defendant.”

The case was investigated by the Canton Police Department and prosecuted by Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Rachel Hines, of the Special Victims Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

CONTACT:

Cyndi Crossland, Public Information Officer
cbcrossland@cherokeega.com
770-479-1488