

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man to Serve 23 Years in Prison for Child Sex Crimes; Co-Defendant Also Sentenced to Prison
State vs. Joseph Franklin Dyson and Tessa Maryann Wilkie

February 4, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on January 15 a two-defendant case involving sex crimes against a young child was closed when the second defendant was sentenced to prison. Charges in the case included child molestation (3 counts), false imprisonment, cruelty to a child in the first degree, cruelty to a child in the second degree, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime.

Cherokee Sheriff's Office began investigating this case in 2021 after a 9-year-old girl disclosed being victimized by a man known to the family. As part of the investigation, the child participated in forensic interviews, where she provided details of incidents that occurred at a home in Cherokee County. During these interviews, the child described multiple acts of sexual assault and child molestation committed upon her by Joseph Franklin Dyson, 37. The child disclosed that these acts occurred when she was around seven years old.

In one incident, Dyson held a gun and instructed the co-defendant in this case to hold down the child to prevent her from escaping. While the co-defendant held the child, Dyson exposed his genital area and attempted to assault the child. The child provided details of this incident, which were later corroborated by the co-defendant during a proffer of facts concerning the case.

"This very young child was afraid that she would be in trouble if she told someone what happened to her, which is often the case for child victims of violent crimes. We are forever thankful that she disclosed the abuse and received the help she needed," said Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. "Anna Crawford Children's Center and their experienced forensic interviewers were able to lend incredible support to the victim during such a difficult time."

On October 24, 2024, Dyson pled guilty to six charges: false imprisonment, child molestation (3 counts), cruelty to a child in the first degree, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime.

Dyson was sentenced, as negotiated, to 50 years, with the first 23 years to serve in prison and the remainder to be served on probation. He may have no contact with the victim, must register with the sex offender registry, and obtain a psychosexual evaluation. While on probation, he must adhere to sex offender special conditions as well as standard conditions of probation.

The co-defendant, Tessa Maryann Wilkie, 27, pled guilty on April 19, 2024, to charges of false imprisonment and cruelty to a child in the second degree. Her sentencing was deferred until January 15.

On January 15, after hearing argument from both the State and the Defense, Superior Court Judge Jennifer Davis sentenced Wilkie to 20 years with the first five years to serve in prison and the remainder to serve on probation.

Wilkie may have no contact with the victim, must register with the sex offender registry, and adhere to sex offender special conditions as well as standard conditions of probation.

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, 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.

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