

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25 Years in Prison for Man Who Admitted to Child Sex Crimes
State vs. Dustin Jon Gottschall

February 25, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Dustin Jon Gottschall, 36, of the Acworth area of Cherokee County, pled guilty on February 18 to aggravated sexual battery, child molestation (5 counts), and cruelty to children in the first degree.

Superior Court Judge Jennifer L. Davis sentenced Gottschall, as negotiated, to 25 years in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by life on probation.

Charges stem from a Cherokee Sheriff's Office investigation that began in November 2022 after a 15-year-old child disclosed that Gottschall had been sexually abusing her for several years, beginning when she was 12 years old.

CSO detectives spoke to Gottschall about these allegations, as well as his roommate and the child's family members. Gottschall initially described the allegations as "weird" and suggested that the victim may have misconstrued something. The victim also participated in a forensic interview conducted by the Anna Crawford Children's Center. During that forensic interview, the victim disclosed she believed the defendant recorded his crimes with his cell phone.

CSO later uncovered digital evidence that substantiated the child's disclosure.

"During the prosecution of this case, CSO's Intelligence Unit conducted a thorough review of the defendant's cell phone based upon the victim's disclosure. Using new technology, they were able to extract evidence located in an encrypted folder the defendant created that corroborated the child in this case," said Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, of the Special Victims Unit. "When this evidence came to light, the defendant made the decision to plead guilty."

At the plea hearing, Gottschall admitted to the charges and was sentenced as negotiated. After serving 25 years in prison, he will spend the remainder of his life on probation subject to sex offender special conditions. He is also forbidden to have contact of any kind with the victim and other named individuals.

"The facts of this case are disturbing, with trauma so deep that the victim was initially unable to even speak the words to describe what this man did to her. Instead, she took pen to paper and wrote out the horrifying story, taking her first step to healing," said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. "We are thankful that this defendant is being held accountable and that this plea spared an innocent victim the pain of having to relive this trauma."

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office. Prosecution was handled by Assistant District Attorney Meaghan Frankish, of the Special Victims Unit. The Anna Crawford Children's Center conducted the forensic interviews.

Sexual Abuse of Children

Child abusers often engage in a grooming process that allows them to perpetrate sexual abuse undetected. “Grooming” in the context of child sexual abuse is a manipulative process intended to secure the child’s silence. Common characteristics of the grooming process include targeting the child, gaining the child and caregiver’s trust, filling a need, using flattery and gifts, isolating the child, sexualizing the relationship, and maintaining control.

Children who have been groomed may be conflicted about their feelings for the abuser because he/she has methodically established a positive relationship with the child prior to introducing sexual touches. Children who have been groomed are also more likely to conceal the abuse and delay disclosing the abuse to others.

To report suspected child abuse, call Child Protective Services at 855-422-4453. If a child is in immediate danger, always call 911.

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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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