

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

Notice of Sentencing

Cherokee County Man Sentenced to Two Life Sentences Plus 70 Years for Sex Crimes Against a Child
State vs. Michael Clay Downey

December 23, 2025 – Cherokee County District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on December 22, Superior Court Judge Shannon Wallace sentenced Michael Clay Downey, 40, of Canton, to life in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by a second life sentence, and an additional 70 years, with the first 69 years to be served in prison. This is the maximum sentence permitted by law.

Downey was found guilty of all nine charges he faced at his jury trial in November. These charges included: two counts of rape, two counts of incest, three counts of aggravated sexual battery, and two counts of child molestation.

The Cherokee Sheriff's Office began investigating this case in September 2024 after a child under the age of 12 disclosed multiple acts of sexual abuse occurring over several months. The defendant, who was known to the child, committed the acts in a home in Canton.

During the December 22 sentencing hearing, the Defense recommended that Downey be sentenced to 25 years in prison, which is the minimum sentence allowed by law, while the State, represented by Assistant District Attorney David Bailey, recommended the maximum sentence.

“The facts of this case are nothing short of atrocious, and no sentence can undo the harm that was done. This defendant raped an innocent 11-year-old child, who will live with the impact of his actions for the rest of her life,” said Assistant District Attorney David Bailey, of the Special Victims Unit, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. “The maximum sentence ensures that this defendant will be held accountable and will spend the remainder of his life in prison.”

At the conclusion of the hearing, Superior Court Judge Shannon Wallace sentenced Downey in accordance with the State’s recommendation.

“This sentence reflects the seriousness of these horrific crimes and our office’s unwavering commitment to protecting children. It sends a clear message that those who sexually abuse children will face the harshest consequences allowed by law. Our office will continue to stand with victims and work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to pursue justice,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway.

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office. Prosecution was handled by Assistant District Attorney David J. Bailey of the Special Victims Unit, with the assistance of Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper, 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