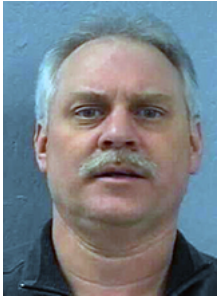


Ash Grove Man Sentenced To Prison For Sexually Abusing Family Members
News

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) - An Ash Grove man was sentenced to prison for about 25 years Friday on multiple charges for sexually abusing two female family members under the age of 12 between 2008 and 2011.



Brett Sanders, 54, had asked the judge for a lesser sentence but received life in prison, which in Missouri equates to 30 years. He will not be eligible for parole until serving 85 percent of his sentence.

He had been convicted in January on three felony counts of first-degree statutory sodomy, one felony count of sexual misconduct involving a child and two felony counts of first-degree child molestation.

Sanders's victims, now 14 and 12, testified about their sexual abuse at the trial, according to a past news release from the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. At the time of the abuse, they were living at Sanders's home, and they only disclosed the abuse when they moved away from Sanders to another state.

When asked why they didn't disclose the abuse earlier, the older victim testified that Sanders threatened her with a gun, and the younger victim testified that she was scared, according to the release.

The older victim also testified that she would try to protect her younger sister from the abuse by drawing Sanders's attention away from her sister—even though she knew that it would mean that she would be abused more, according to the release.

According to a Friday news release from the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the mother of the victims said her oldest daughter cut herself to relieve the emotional pain and her youngest daughter began wetting the bed every night and it continued to the time of trial.

The mother said her daughters were scared of going to the bathroom and, according to the release, did not want to be left alone with men.

In January, a jury found Sanders guilty and recommended a life sentence for each statutory sodomy conviction, as well as a four-year sentence for the sexual misconduct involving a child conviction and a 10-year sentence for each child molestation conviction.

The state prosecutor asked the judge to follow the jury's recommendation, according to the release, in part because the defendant refused to accept responsibility in this offense and even until sentencing, accused the victims of lying about the abuse, although he gave no motive for the

children to lie.â