



Gordon P. McLaughlin

District Attorney

Michael Paustian Sentenced to 8 Years to Life

Michael Dale Paustian was sentenced on July 19th to 8 years to life in the Colorado Department of Corrections. This sentence is what is known as an indeterminate sentence, meaning that he will first become eligible for release to parole at the completion of the 8-year sentence, but can be held in custody for the remainder of his life. The Department of Corrections determines when he will be released.

Following his prison sentence, he will be required to serve 10 years of Sex Offender Intensive Supervision Probation. Some of the requirements for Mr. Paustian's probation include:

- He will undergo sex offender-specific evaluation and identification. Requiring sex offender registration for the remainder of his life
- He will not subscribe to any internet service provider nor access the internet in any way until approved by the probation officer in consultation with the community supervision team. He will not subscribe to any internet service provider nor access the internet in any way until approved by the probation officer in consultation with the community supervision tea

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- He will not have contact with any children until approved by a probation officer in consultation with the community supervision team.
- He will undergo both mental health and substance abuse evaluation and any treatment programming that is recommended.

This sentence followed a guilty plea of one count Sex Assault on a Child by a Person of Trust with a victim under the age of 15, a class three felony and Sexual Exploitation of a Child, also a class three felony. Paustian entered his guilty plea on May 17th, 2024.

In September 2022, a victim came forward to the Larimer County Sheriff's Office to report that she had been sexually assaulted repeatedly by Michael Paustian. At the time of the assaults, the victim was 6 years old.

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PINTEREST

Because of the nature of his work and members of his family, there may be more victims or witnesses of criminal behavior.

Anyone who believes they are a victim or have additional information related to this type of behavior please contact Sargent Rita Servin at 970.498.5513 or Larimer County Crime Stoppers at 970.228.6868 www.stopcriminals.org.

Throughout the investigation, it was revealed that the victim had disclosed the assaults to several members of the family and Mr. Paustain had disclosed it as well, but the authorities were never notified. The victim did not receive the help she needed, and Mr. Paustian did not receive the accountability he deserved.

The prosecution team, led by Deputy District Attorney Leeah Lechuga spoke about the victim's bravery in coming forward. "She has become the person she needed to protect her when she was six," said Lechuga.

"But she shouldn't have to. Adults have the responsibility to stand up for kids they know are being abused."

The victim in the case gave a statement to the Judge detailing the abuse she endured and how her attempts for support were ignored. "I did what I was supposed to do. I told multiple adults but now I am here still having to advocate for myself and any other children that might be in harm."

"I have waited 17 years to get justice for my six-year-old self and I can't wait to bring her peace and justice."

"A child who has been sexually abused is always a tragedy, but a child who has experienced that abuse at the hands of a person who was in a position of trust is almost unimaginable," stated District Attorney Gordon McLaughlin.

"That combined with the fact that the victim confided to trusted members of her family about the abuse and was ignored is reprehensible."

"Her courage is what helped to secure this conviction and allowed for the potential for a significantly longer sentence in prison. I am thankful for law enforcement and members of our team who not only believed her story but ensured her abuser was held accountable."

There are resources and support available for survivors of child sexual abuse. To learn more and connect with those who can help:

ChildSafe

<https://www.childsafecolorado.org/>

The Crawford Child Advocacy Center

<https://crawfordcac.org/>

Sexual Assault Victim Advocate (SAVA) Center

<https://savacenter.org/>

Enough Abuse Campaign

<https://enoughabuse.org/get-help/survivor-support/>