

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



SHANNON WALLACE
District Attorney

Cherokee County Justice Center
90 North Street, Suite 390
Canton, GA 30114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cyndi Crossland
Public Information Officer
cbcrossland@cherokeega.com
770-479-1488

Canton resident convicted of sex crimes involving child under 10 years of age, sentenced to life in prison
State vs. Johnathan Collins

June 14, 2022 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that on May 25, 2022, a Cherokee County jury convicted Canton resident Johnathan Collins, 39, of multiple sex crimes involving a child under the age of 10. Following the conviction, Chief Superior Court Judge Ellen McElyea sentenced Collins to life in confinement in the state penitentiary without the possibility of parole.

Law enforcement first became aware of allegations against Collins when the child confided to a third grade classmate in May 2019. The friend told a teacher, and the school reported the allegations to law enforcement. The child, who is not a resident of Cherokee County, had visited the defendant in the summer of 2018.

During a forensic interview, the child described multiple crimes that Collins committed against her over the course of the summer. After an investigation, the Cherokee Sheriff's Office arrested Collins on June 3, 2019.

"Johnathan Collins repeatedly violated a little girl over a period of weeks, escalating his behavior when he knew she would keep a secret," said Assistant District Attorney Leyna Pope of the Special Victims Unit who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. "He abused her trust, stole her innocence, and scared her into silence. Nine months after he committed his crimes, this little girl had the courage to begin to disclose the nightmare she endured at his hands."

During the three-day trial, the jury listened to the testimony of 10 individuals, watched the victim's forensic interview, and viewed photographs of the house where the crimes were committed. The defendant also testified on his behalf. The jury deliberated for about two hours before finding Collins guilty on all 13 counts, including rape, aggravated sodomy, aggravated child molestation, child molestation, incest, and cruelty to children.

"This defendant hurt a little girl in unspeakable ways. While he was able to scare her into silence at the time of the abuse, he was not able to keep her silent. She displayed incredible courage throughout the prosecution of this case. With this guilty verdict, this child no longer has to live in fear," said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. "And our community is safer with this man no longer able to prey on innocent children."

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by ADA Leyna Pope of the Special Victims Unit.

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.

###