



Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

Birgit Fladager
District Attorney

Assistant District Attorney
Dave Harris

Chief Deputies
Doug Raynaud
Annette Rees
Marlisa Ferreira

Chief Investigator
Kevin Bertalotto

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: 6/27/2016
Re: Santiago Casontos
50 years to life prison

For More Information Contact:

Kristy Ibarra, Executive Assistant
Phone: (209) 525-5519

Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Santiago Casontos, age 55, of Modesto, was sentenced today to 50 years to life for two counts of Sodomy on a Child under the age of 10. Chief Deputy District Attorney Annette Rees prosecuted the case for the People.

Casontos met the victim's mother at a local park and befriended her, eventually moving in to live with them in their home. In April 2012 while the mother and grandmother were away, the defendant sodomized the developmentally delayed seven-year-old victim twice over two separate days. The victim told his grandmother right away and a sexual assault examination showed evidence of trauma. When confronted, the defendant confessed but claimed the seven-year-old child had initiated the acts. He was arrested and charged in Stanislaus County Superior Court.

In October of 2014 the defense declared Casontos incompetent to stand trial due to cognitive disabilities. A jury trial on that issue in April of 2015 found him competent to stand trial. On March 16, 2016 Casontos was convicted of the crimes after a jury trial in which the victim, his mother, his grandmother, and a social worker testified.

During a June 20, 2016 hearing, the victim's mother told the Court how much her son has suffered and the emotional trouble he is having now in dealing with the trauma. On June 27, 2016 during a sentencing hearing, Chief Deputy Rees argued that each separate incident of sodomy should be punished consecutive to each other, based on the position of trust that Casontos violated, the victim's vulnerable status as a young developmentally delayed child, and because each count was serious and violent and occurred on two separate days. Chief Rees pointed out to the court that in between each forcible sexual assault the defendant had twenty-four hours to contemplate what he had done and stop his attacks. Instead, he took the opportunity to sexually assault the victim again.

Judge Marie Silveira agreed with the prosecution and sentenced Casontos to 50 years to life in state prison. If he is ever released, he will also have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

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