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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: February 7, 2020
Re: Mario Garcia, Jr.
Possession for sale of drugs and child
endangerment jury trial conviction

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Mario Garcia, Jr., age 46, of Salida, was convicted of possession for sale of methamphetamine and four counts of placing a child in danger of death or great bodily injury following a jury trial. Deputy District Attorney Patrick Hogan prosecuted the case for the People.

On August 28, 2018, Stanislaus Sheriff's Deputy Caleb Murphy contacted Garcia who was walking through a neighborhood carrying a large baseball bat. Garcia was on post-release community supervision (PRCS) at the time and had multiple prior convictions for possession of drugs for sale. Deputy Murphy decided to conduct a probation search of Garcia's home in Salida to make sure Garcia was in compliance with the terms of his release from custody.

When deputies entered the unlocked front door of Garcia's home, they found four children, ages four to twelve, sleeping in a bedroom next to the kitchen. Two (2) pounds of methamphetamine in various stages of packaging, another two ounces of methamphetamine in several baggies, additional plastic packaging and a digital scale were located on the kitchen counter and easily accessible to the four minors. Methamphetamine was also clearly visible spilled on the countertop.

Just before trial started in this case, Garcia pleaded guilty to the possession of methamphetamine for sale charge. The jury trial on the remaining felony child endangerment charges started on January 29, 2020, before Judge Thomas Zeff. Witnesses included Stanislaus Sheriff's Department Special Investigations Unit Detective Christopher Gallo who testified as an expert on major narcotics investigations. He told the jury about the dangers involved with running a methamphetamine distribution operation out of a residence. Those dangers included subjecting the minor children to a high risk of violent robberies and home invasions that often occur from rival drug dealers or criminal street gangs. Dr. Lynn Raible, M.D., Ph.D., an expert in the science of addictive drugs, testified about the dangers of methamphetamine exposure to children, how the drug can widely contaminate a home environment like Garcia's home and the potentially lethal effects of methamphetamine exposure to the human body.

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At the conclusion of a two-day trial, the jury returned guilty verdicts on all four felony charges after fifteen minutes of deliberations.

Garcia is currently in custody at the Stanislaus County Jail. He is scheduled to return to court for sentencing on February 28, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in Department 5. Garcia faces a potential sentence of 10 years and eight months in state prison.

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