



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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Babysitter Sentenced to Life for Molests

District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced that Jefferson William Thames, 33, Oroville was sentenced to 67 years and four months to life in state prison today for the sexual abuse of two young children that he had babysat. Thames had been convicted of separate counts of molestation of a six-year-old girl and seven-year-old boy during an October court trial before Superior Court Judge Steven Benson. Judge Benson also found that Thames had a prior adult sexual assault conviction from 1996 and that Thames had failed to register as a sex offender. At today's sentencing, Judge Benson sided with the prosecution request to deny a motion to reduce Thames' potential sentence and instead sentenced him to the maximum term possible, noting numerous aggravating circumstances.

The case arose after the Butte County Sheriff's Department responded to a sexual assault report in July of 2008. The reporting party told deputies she overheard her six-year-old daughter disclose to her sibling that Thames had put his "thingy" inside her "bottom." The victim was forensically interviewed and multiple acts of forcible sodomy were disclosed. The victim's parents related Thames was a friend of the family who had routinely babysat while the parents were at work. The victim's underwear was recovered and Thames' DNA was found in them. A medical exam of the victim found tearing of the anus. The investigation additionally discovered that Thames had failed to register as a sexual offender for the proceeding six months after moving to a new location.

While these charges were pending, in December of 2008, a new sexual assault was reported by a father who stated his seven-year-old son had seen a picture of Thames, appeared visibly shaken and stated Thames had "humped him in the butt." A forensic interview occurred thereafter and a single instance of sodomy was disclosed. The father of the victim stated Thames had previously lived with them and babysat in exchange for room and board. Both cases were consolidated and Thames was found guilty as charged on October 27, 2009. Ramsey said Thames will be 100 years old before he becomes eligible for parole.

Ramsey said both victims testified at trial. "It was very difficult for them to confront their molester in the open courtroom, but the judge allowed us to make them comfortable and gain their confidence in going forth with their most difficult stories. Justice did prevail."