



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Chico High Track Attacker Sentenced**

The 14-year-old male juvenile who attacked a 71-year-old woman walking on the Chico High School track in June of 2022 was in Butte County Juvenile Court yesterday to be sentenced. The teenager had previously admitted to an attempted first-degree murder charge. He received the maximum sentence of four years, six months in juvenile hall.

The juvenile court judge noted the sentence, the maximum under current California law, was “woefully inadequate” given the vicious and remorseless attack on the elderly woman. The judge additionally found the teenager was on juvenile probation at the time of the attack for convictions of vehicle theft, unlawful 911 calls, vandalism, theft, and receiving stolen property.

The teenager told a court-appointed psychologist that he really didn’t remember the attack because he had ingested marijuana and Xanax and blacked out. The judge during the sentencing stated he did not believe the juvenile’s excuse. The psychologist reported the juvenile displayed no remorse from the time of the attack until his sentencing and offered a diagnosis that the juvenile suffered from an antisocial personality disorder.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the victim, who is disabled from brain and other injuries, is not being identified to protect her privacy. Family members took the woman to live with them in the eastern U.S. to assist with her expected long-term and difficult recovery. The victim’s daughter sent a letter to the court expressing how her parent’s previously active and engaged life was shattered and that she is now a shell of her former self.

Ramsey said the victim was walking on the Chico High School track around 11:00 p.m. after the Chico High School graduation ceremony that took place on June 2, 2022. The victim reportedly regularly exercised on the track.

The teenager snuck up on the lone woman from behind and struck her in the upper body with a fence T-post causing serious injuries and a brain bleed. After the attack, he dragged the victim to a corner of the field where she was strangled and left unconscious. The juvenile then leisurely left the area. His actions were captured on nearby video surveillance.

Ramsey said the victim at some point regained consciousness and dragged herself into a bathroom on the field where she was found by high school custodians at about 6:30 a.m. the next morning.

Ramsey noted recent legislative changes to California law prohibit juveniles under the age of 16 from being tried as adults. In addition to the attempted murder count, Ramsey said the juvenile also admitted an additional allegation of using a weapon (the T-post) and another allegation of causing great bodily injury to an elder. He was sentenced to the maximum term of four years, six months to be served at the new “Commitment to Success Program” at the Butte County Juvenile Hal.

Ramsey explained the juvenile was to be incarcerated locally because there is currently no other option for maximum incarceration for serious crimes committed by juveniles and tried as juveniles in California. The California Youth Authority (CYA) was eliminated by the legislature in 2005 and in its place, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) was created. However, the closure of the Department of Juvenile Justice was announced on May 19, 2020, and was phased out, not accepting any new commitments from the state’s juvenile courts in June 2021. It will be fully shut down on June 30, 2023, making all serious juvenile offenders the sole responsibility of the local counties.

Ramsey noted:

“Despite popular myth, CYA and then DJJ, have not been “Gladiator Schools” for the past two decades. These state institutions had the most cutting-edge and scientifically-validated rehab programs for youth in the nation. A troubled and dangerous youth had the resources of these state institutions as the best chance at rehabilitation during the limited time that a juvenile is subject to the juvenile court’s jurisdiction. Unfortunately, the legislature and the governor closed these state institutions to our most dangerous youths last year.

However, the Butte County Probation Department, which runs the local juvenile hall, has along with local criminal justice partners, begun an effort to turn our local Juvenile Hall into a higher security facility that will attempt to replicate the DJJ rehab programs for extremely dangerous youth locally. It will be a work in progress.”