

# *News Release*

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## *45 Years for Ladson Man who Raped Young Child*

Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson announced that a Berkeley County jury found Jeramy Parks guilty on Wednesday for molesting a child who was three and four years old at the time of the assaults. The victim endured continuous abuse for over two years at the hands of the defendant. Circuit Judge Deadre L. Jefferson sentenced the defendant to a total of 45 years on the six indictments. Parks must serve 85% of his sentence before release.

The child victim initially disclosed sexual abuse by the defendant in June of 2012 at which point the Department of Social Services (DSS) became involved with the family. DSS put a safety plan in place instructing the mother of the children to keep Parks away from the child victim and the other four children in the home. Tragically, the mother continued to give Parks access to the child whom he continued to sexually assault. The abuse continued for another 5 months.

After an anonymous tip from a neighbor, Parks was eventually discovered in the home, and the children were finally removed from their mother. The mother's parental rights were terminated and she is facing charges for Unlawful Conduct Toward a Child, a felony that carries up to 10 years.

At trial, prosecutors presented multiple witnesses including the victim, law enforcement officers, DSS case workers, relatives, foster parents and an expert witness on the Dynamics of Child Abuse. The young victim was seven at the time of trial. Assistant Solicitor, Anne Williams said the most important witness in the case was the child victim. "This young child was courageous. She overcame her fears to face her attacker in court and left the jury with not doubt about the truth of her abuse," said Williams.

Solicitor Wilson credited Berkeley County Sherriff's Department for working closely with her office to achieve the conviction. "In these cases, it is critical for law enforcement to involve our prosecutors very early-on. The two offices worked together for a good verdict."

The case was prosecuted by Williams and Deborah Herring-Lash, who heads up the Ninth Circuit's Vulnerable Victims Unit. Herring-Lash questioned an expert witness at trial, as the State presented evidence about the reactions of children who are victimized by sexual abuse.

Parks was convicted of 5 counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct with a minor First Degree and received a 30 year sentence, which was followed consecutively by 15 years on one count Criminal Sexual Conduct Towards a Child Third Degree for a total of 45 years. Parks was found not guilty regarding the abuse of a second victim. Parks had a prior conviction for Assault and Battery of a High and Aggravated nature for which he was sentenced to five years in prison.