

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Cherokee County Man Sentenced to Life with 35 Years to Serve,  
for Sexual Abuse Against a Child  
State vs. Austin Carl Puckett**

**May 31, 2019** – Austin Carl Puckett, 29, was sentenced on May 29 for sexually assaulting his girlfriend's 10-year-old daughter at the home they shared in Holly Springs. Earlier this month, a Cherokee County jury found Puckett guilty of one count of aggravated child molestation, one count of criminal attempt to commit aggravated child molestation, one count of aggravated sexual battery, and one count of child molestation.

During the trial, the District Attorney's Office detailed the extent of sexual assault that occurred in the home that the child shared with her mother, sibling, and Puckett. The child was home alone with Puckett frequently. The abuse occurred from 2017-2018, when the child was 9 and 10 years old. The child reported the abuse to her grandmother in March 2018.

"A child's innocence was lost due to this defendant's crime. The defendant was a father figure to her, someone she trusted and cared about. But he betrayed that trust by sexually assaulting her," said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. "The jury heard evidence from both sides and their verdict has ensured that this man will never harm another child again."

In recommending a life sentence with 40 years to serve in prison, Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Zachary Smith, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State, said, "A life sentence is nothing compared to the life sentence Austin Puckett inflicted on this child, who lost her ability to trust men due to his actions. The defendant has a history of family violence and child sexual abuse was an escalation of this. Thank God this child reported the sexual abuse so he could be stopped."

In delivering the sentence on May 29, Judge Ellen McElyea praised the child for coming forward and testifying. She expressed hope that the sentencing would bring closure and wished her the best in the future.

Judge McElyea sentenced Puckett to two life sentences with 35 years to serve in prison for the aggravated child molestation and aggravated sexual battery counts. She also sentenced him to 30 years to serve in prison for criminal attempt to commit aggravated child molestation, and 20 years to serve 19 years in prison for child molestation. All counts are to run concurrent with each other for a total sentence of life to serve 35 years in confinement in the State Penal System.

*The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.*

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