

## Cop Gets 28-year Term For Sex Abuse Of Girl

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A suspended Chicago police officer, who had received three commendations and a hero's award before he was convicted of child molesting, was sentenced Wednesday to 28 years in prison.

Walter Wells, 58, a former Belmont District police officer, had been convicted of the aggravated criminal sexual assault and sexual abuse of an 11-year-old girl who testified that Wells had molested her for several years.

Cook County Criminal Court Judge Arthur Cieslik said that Wells had been a "highly commendable" policeman, but "when you got home, you ceased to be a police officer and instead decided to be an animal.

"I can't make any strong enough statements to say how I feel. But I remembered the expression on that child's face three days after she testified."

The child, now in the 5th grade, testified that Wells first sexually assaulted her when she was in the 1st or 2d grade and continued until last year.

"We teach our children from an early age to call the police," said Assistant State's Atty. Dale Weigand.

The child testified that she finally told a school nurse about it after she saw a show on child abuse. The show "tells you to tell somebody if somebody's hurting you," she said.

At the sentencing hearing Wednesday, the girl's mother said that her daughter regressed "back to a 2-year-old" as a result of the continuing assaults.

"Instead of going forwards, she steadily went backwards," the mother testified.

Wells was suspended indefinitely in April and the department probably will begin dismissal procedures, said William Keating, chief of patrol.