



GUILTY

Former Berkeley cop pleads guilty of statutory rape of teen



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FERGUSON • A former rookie Berkeley police officer has pleaded guilty of statutory rape and sodomy involving a 15-year-old girl last summer in Ferguson.

Philip Daniel Peterson, 27, will be sentenced Sept. 19 in St. Louis County Circuit Court.

On Thursday, Peterson pleaded guilty of six felonies: second-degree statutory rape, first-

degree endangering the welfare of a child and four counts of second-degree statutory sodomy.

"He is very sorry for what he did and will be

asking for sex offender treatment so it never happens again," his lawyer, Eric V. Barnhart, said in an interview Friday.

Peterson lives in the 200 block of Anistasia Drive in Hazelwood. He was accused of having sexual intercourse and sexual contact with the underage girl on several occasions between July and September, according to court records.

The sexual misconduct happened in the city of Ferguson and while Peterson was off duty, Berkeley's police chief, Col. Frank McCall Jr., said Friday.

Peterson had worked for the Berkeley Police Department for six or seven months until he was fired in September, according to McCall.

It was Peterson's first job as a police officer. After the girl's claims surfaced, Berkeley police determined that Peterson had violated several department rules and he was terminated, McCall said.

Peterson entered a "blind plea" on Thursday, which means he didn't go along with the state's recommendation for sentencing and will take whatever punishment Judge Michael T. Jamison hands down.

The state's pre-trial recommendation was for five years in prison, Barnhart said, although the state has withdrawn that recommendation now and could ask for more. The assistant prosecuting attorney handling the case could not be reached for comment Friday.

Don Schneider, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office, said he could not comment until Peterson is sentenced.

Peterson remains in jail.

"He's lost everything," Barnhart said. "His job, his reputation. He'll be (listed as a) sex offender the rest of his life."