

Former Sheriff Deputy Accused Of Raping Toddler Gets Plea Deal

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WAVERLY, Ohio - The trial of a former Pike County chief deputy was set to begin this week, but instead, the suspect pleaded no contest to a lesser charge.

Clyde Franklin Sanders Jr. was originally charged with four first-degree felony charges, including rape. Sanders pleaded no contest to one third-degree felony charge of gross sexual imposition instead.

The Ohio Attorney General's Office prosecuted the case, and offered a plea deal that could mean as little as one year in prison.

The original charge was the rape of a 3-year-old girl, and he was also charged with kidnapping and child endangering.

An agreement was reached where Sanders pleaded no contest to the lesser charge of gross sexual imposition Monday.

Sanders retired in his mid-40s, but before that, he used to be in charge of investigating child sex crimes.

"I knew him from the Pike County Sheriff's Office. He was the chief deputy, a detective, a sergeant for years. I've been here since 1992 off and on. I've probably handled several hundred cases over the years," said Pike County Prosecutor Robert Junk.

Because of that, the prosecutor and judge excused themselves from the case and handed it over to the attorney general.

Residents in the area told **NBC4** that they are shocked at what happened, and that after the crime, the suspect will only be sentenced to one to five years in prison.

"They was too easy on him. They should have been harder on him," said Doug Murray, a Pike County resident.

The attorney general's office won't comment on the case because Sanders hasn't yet been sentenced.

Junk, who was not involved with the case, said the plea deals are often the best solution to avoid a child having to testify in a case that often depends on what a child says versus what an adult says.

There were also no witnesses in the case.

"I've been there before on cases such as that as well. If you can get a plea on a case, especially without exposing the child to more trauma, cross examination and those type of things, you definitely want to, especially with children of tender years, 3, 4, 5 years old," Junk said.

A plea was the only way to avoid a trial and put Sanders in prison. He could also be ordered to be listed as a registered sex offender for 25 years.

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