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L.A. deputy charged with sex crimes with teen Explorer

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A Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy was arrested this week and charged with sex crimes against a teenage girl enrolled in the department's program for youths interested in law enforcement.

Deputy Manuel Enrique Perallon Jr. was charged with one felony count of oral copulation of a minor and misdemeanor child molesting. The deputy's victim, authorities said, was a 16-year-old girl enrolled in the sheriff's department's Explorer program.

Perallon, 36, was in charge of overseeing the volunteer youth program at the Cerritos station. Sheriff's officials received information last year that the deputy was engaged in an "inappropriate relationship" with a teenage Explorer and a probe was launched, said sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore.

The investigation determined that Perallon had victimized the teen, Whitmore said, over the span of several months, sometimes while the deputy was on duty. Supervision and auditing of the youth program has been heightened as a result, Whitmore said, though sheriff's investigators do not believe Perallon had other victims.

The deputy faces a maximum prison term of four years. Following the felony charge, he was relieved of duty without pay.

"All crimes are heinous, especially ones like this," Whitmore said. "Not only is it illegal, but it's categorically unacceptable."

The sheriff's Explorer program is an incubator for youth interested in careers in law enforcement. Teen volunteers are allowed to assist law enforcement in basic tasks and are provided guidance in how to become cops once they're older.

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