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## Former Boulder County deputy guilty of Internet sexual exploitation of a child

Rick Ferguson takes a plea deal, avoids trial

 By Pierrette J. Shields Longmont Times-Call  
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BOULDER -- A former Boulder County deputy pleaded guilty to felony Internet sexual exploitation of a child Tuesday morning, sparing himself a scheduled December trial on multiple felonies.

Under the deal with prosecutors, Rick Jon Ferguson will be sentenced to probation on the exploitation count and will only risk prison time if he later violates the terms of that probation or if a judge decides that prison is appropriate for a felony obscenity count, according to the deal. Ferguson is scheduled to return to Boulder District Court on Oct. 30 for sentencing.

He pleaded guilty to felony sexual exploitation of a child, felony obscenity, and official misconduct, a petty offense. Seven other counts were dismissed.

Ferguson was accused of using his Boulder County Sheriff's Office-issued computer to carry on sexually explicit online chats with girls as young as 11.

According to the sheriff's office, county IT employees noticed unusual activity on the laptop in Ferguson's patrol car and uncovered the sexually explicit conversations. Further investigation revealed that the conversations were with people on the Internet who claimed to be young girls, according to reports. District attorney investigators and sheriff's investigators secured a search warrant for Ferguson's Lafayette home and seized his personal computers, which were also searched.

Ferguson initially entered pleas of not guilty to the charges and was scheduled for a trial to begin on Dec. 10. The plea spares him the trial and any lengthy prison time that could have come with multiple felony convictions.

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Ferguson

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