

Former Rockdale deputy pleads not guilty to child molestation

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#CONYERS — A former Rockdale County Sheriff's Office deputy charged with child molestation pleaded not guilty in Rockdale County Superior Court.

#Joseph Robert Harding waived his right to a formal arraignment Thursday. Harding was not in the courtroom; his plea was entered by his attorney, William F. Todd Jr.

#Harding, 23, of Conyers is charged with two counts of aggravated child molestation and three counts of child molestation.

#Harding was arrested in May following an investigation by the Conyers Police Department into allegations that he molested a juvenile female who was an acquaintance in April.

#The Rockdale County Sheriff's Office was made aware of the investigation and conducted an internal investigation, authorities said at the time. Harding's employment with the RCSO was terminated following the internal investigation. He had worked in the Rockdale County Jail for seven months.

#“We worked with the Conyers Police Department as they conducted their investigation and swiftly terminated Harding following his arrest,” Sheriff Eric Levett said at the time. “Unfortunately, this is another example of an employee not representing the Rockdale County Sheriff's Office in the high standard of conduct and professionalism that the citizens of this county deserve.”