

Police sergeant indicted on child-pornography charges

[John Futtly](#)

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Columbus police find child porn charges "disturbing"

Child pornography charges filed Wednesday against a Columbus police sergeant who served as the Police Division's spokesman damage the public's perception of law enforcement, said a sergeant who recently held the same job.

"This is disturbing conduct from a member of the division, one that is publicly out there representing all of us within the Division of Police," Sgt. Rich Weiner said of the allegations against Sgt. Dean P. Worthington.

"The public entrusts us to protect them from this kind of crime, and right now this conduct simply erodes that trust. The public needs to know we take this very serious," Weiner said.

Worthington, 51, was indicted by a Franklin County grand jury on three counts of pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor and one count of illegal use of a minor in nudity oriented material.

Worthington used his personal cellphone to download child pornography, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien said.

Between January and July, he uploaded an image to Tumblr, a social-networking site, and downloaded multiple videos and images depicting young children engaging in sexual activity with adults, O'Brien said.

The investigation was prompted by a tip from Tumblr, he said.

O'Brien said there is no indication that Worthington created any of the images or that any of the images depict children from central Ohio.

The charges include two second-degree felonies, each punishable by as many as eight years in prison, and two fourth-degree felonies, each punishable by as many as 18 months in prison. A conviction on any of the charges also would require Worthington to register as a sex offender.

Worthington turned himself in as soon as he became aware of the charges and is being held in the county jail, his attorney, Daniel Sabol, said. He is scheduled to be arraigned Friday afternoon in Common Pleas Court.

"We will plead not guilty, conduct a thorough investigation, review the state's case and proceed accordingly," Sabol said in a text message.

VIDEO: [Columbus police find child porn charges "disturbing"](#)

VIDEO: [Tumblr tipped authorities to child pornography used by police sergeant](#)

Worthington was relieved of his duties as police spokesman July 17, when a search warrant was executed on his Hilliard home, Weiner said. Worthington turned in his badge and gun and chose to take personal leave that he has accumulated during his nearly 22 years with the division.

The division will conduct an internal investigation after the criminal case is resolved, Weiner said.

The Columbus Division of Police was not involved in the criminal investigation, which was handled by the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, O'Brien said.

Although electronic devices were removed from Worthington's home during the search, all of the images that led to the indictments were found on the cellphone taken from him, O'Brien said. "So I don't think there's a question about custody or ownership or possession of the phone on which the images were found."

Worthington was named public-information officer in September, making him one of the faces of the division, taking the position that Weiner had held for 10 years. Weiner left the spokesman job to move to the Internal Affairs Bureau, but said he will serve as an interim spokesman while the division decides what to do about the vacancy.

Before getting the public-information position, Worthington spent six years in Internal Affairs, which investigates allegations of wrongdoing by officers. He was promoted to sergeant in 2006.

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