

# Former teacher enters guilty plea to sexual abuse charges involving eight separate victims

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**EDWARDSVILLE** — A **Bethalto** man pleaded guilty today to sexual abuse charges involving eight separate victims dating from 2011 to 2014.

**Jason E. Ehlers** (d.o.b. 12/1/77) was charged in April 2014 by **Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons**. He pleaded guilty today to one count Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault of a Child (Class X Felony), one count of Criminal Sexual Assault (Class 1 Felony), three counts of Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse (Class 2 Felony), and three counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Child (Class A Misdemeanor).

At the time of the charges, Ehlers was a teacher in the **Triad School District** and a former teacher in the Bethalto School District. Investigators with the Bethalto Police Department determined at that time that no current or former students of Ehlers were his victims. He subsequently resigned his position.

The investigation revealed that the abuse of the victims occurred at Ehlers' home, and



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he victims in the cases knew the defendant prior to the abuse. Due to the age of the victims and the State's Attorney's desire to maintain their privacy, additional information regarding the victims will not be released. Prosecutors kept family members apprised of the case and met with them prior to the plea.

State's Attorney Gibbons acknowledged the vital work of Assistant State's Attorneys Kathleen Nolan, head of the office's Children's Justice Division, and Ali Foley, whose collaboration with the Madison County Child Advocacy Center and the Bethalto Police Department secured the plea and conviction of Ehlers. "This case illustrates the importance of the coordinated effort needed to protect our children and bring predators to justice."

Prosecutors plan to seek a sentence of 35 years in prison for Ehlers who will remain in custody at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville pending sentencing where he has been held on a bond of \$500,000. Following the completion of a Pre-Sentencing Investigation, Associate Judge Neil Schroeder, who accepted Ehlers' plea, will set a sentencing date.