

Belleville Man Sentenced To 15 Years For Exploiting Minors To Produce Child Sexual Abuse Material

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EAST ST. LOUIS – A U.S. District judge sentenced a Belleville man to spend 15 years in federal prison after he pled guilty to four counts of production, distribution, and transportation of child sexual abuse material.

U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe had this statement about the case: "Zachary R. Dennert, 21, will serve 10 years of supervised release following his prison sentence. The defendant targeted young boys on social media, gained their trust by pretending to be a young girl and exploited his victims for sexual images.

“His sentence reflects the severity of his manipulative behavior, and I applaud the investigative agencies for their work in bringing this offender to justice.”

According to court documents, Dennert created social media profiles on several platforms purporting to be a teenage female in 2020. Using the profiles, he contacted numerous male minors and requested explicit images. Dennert received images from victims ranging in age from 11 to 15 years old.

Investigators recovered more than 600 images of child sexual abuse material from Dennert’s account. Task force members with the U.S. Secret Service and the O’Fallon Police Department conducted the investigation, with assistance from Saint Clair County State’s Attorney Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexandria Burns prosecuted the case. This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Led by the United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims.

For more information, visit www.usdoj.gov/psc.