

First-Grade Teacher Charged with Solicitation of Child Sexual Abuse Material

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EAST ST. LOUIS – A man who taught first grade at New Baden Elementary School and coached girls' sports teams for Wesclin Community Unit School District 3 is facing a federal charge accusing him of soliciting child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Jonathan C. Villmer, Jr., 25, of New Baden, Illinois, was charged via criminal complaint and is scheduled for arraignment on Wednesday in U.S. District Court in the Southern District of Illinois.

“Adults who prey on children and their vulnerabilities are menaces to society,” said U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe. “Individuals who work in schools and also exploit minors emulate another level of outwardly dangerous behavior.” The case was initiated by an otherwise unrelated investigation by the Carmi Police Department regarding the distribution of CSAM. That investigation led to an account soliciting CSAM on Snapchat that law enforcement connected to Villmer.

According to court documents, after obtaining a search warrant for Villmer’s Snapchat account, police discovered explicit conversations with a 13-year-old minor. Villmer asked the minor for the “sexiest images,” discussed having sex and taking the minor’s virginity, and requested photographs of her genitals. Sexually explicit conversations and requests for images with other purported minors were also identified within Villmer’s Snapchat account.

Based upon IP address records associated with the Snapchat account, law enforcement connected the account to Villmer. On Aug. 18, 2023, law enforcement executed a search warrant on Villmer’s New Baden residence and seized two cell phones and other electronic devices. Villmer was arrested on scene. An indictment is merely a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge until proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury. If convicted, Villmer could face up to 20 years’ imprisonment. His first court appearance is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 23, 2023, at the federal courthouse in East St. Louis.

The Department of Homeland Security Investigations is conducting the investigation with support from the New Baden and Carmi Police Departments, and the Jefferson County and Clinton County Sheriffs’ Departments. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ali Burns is prosecuting the case. Anyone who believes they have information related to this case may contact Homeland Security Investigations Task Force Officer Bobby Wallace at the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office by calling 618-244-8004. This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys’ Offices and CEOS, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims.