

BELLEVILLE MAN SENTENCED TO 35 YEARS FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING YOUNG GIRL

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Newark- Acting Essex County Prosecutor's Theodore N. Stephens, II, announced today that Jose Santana, 60, of Belleville was sentenced to 35 years in New Jersey State prison by the Honorable Martin Cronin, Judge of the Superior Court, for sexually assaulting a 9-year-old little girl.

On Nov. 15, 2019 Santana was convicted by an Essex County jury of three counts of aggravated sexual assault, two counts of sexual assault, one count of possession of child pornography and one count of endangering the welfare of a child. Sentencing was delayed because of the pandemic. Santana has been incarcerated awaiting sentencing.

On Friday, Oct, 15 Judge Cronin sentenced Santana to 35 years. Under the No Early Release Act, he must serve 85 percent of his sentence before he will be eligible for parole.

"Hopefully, this will give closure to the family and this little girl will be able to rest easy knowing her brave actions will prevent him from hurting her or anyone else in the future," said Assistant Prosecutor Peter C. Polidoro, who tried the case with Assistant Prosecutor Tony Gutierrez.

The assaults occurred on multiple occasions while the little girl was visiting Santana and his wife at their Belleville residence.

In addition to sexually assaulting the victim, Santana forced her to watch child pornography while the sexual assaults occurred. When officers executed a search warrant at the defendant's home, they discovered child pornography on his computer.

“I hope that this sentence of 35 years sends a clear message that sexual abuse of a child will not be tolerated and will be punished severely,” said Assistant Prosecutor Gutierrez.

Prosecutor Stephens lauded the ECPO’s Special Victims Unit and the forensic investigation unit, Wynona’s House and the Belleville Police Department for bringing this case to a successful conclusion.