

**ULSTER COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**



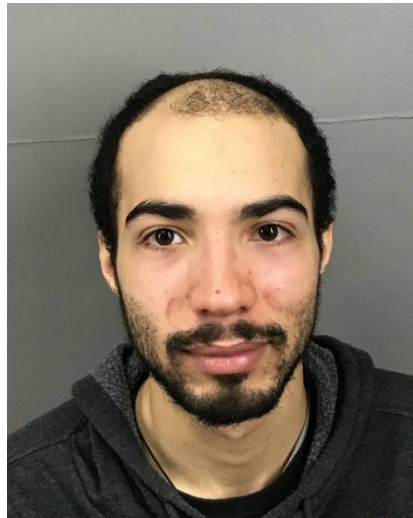
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ULSTER COUNTY DA'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES SAUGERTIES MAN'S
SENTENCE FOLLOWING CONVICTION OF PREDATORY SEXUAL ABUSE
AGAINST A CHILD**



Kingston, NY—On March 20, 2023, Benjamin Santiago, age 28, of Saugerties, NY, was sentenced by Hon. Bryan Rounds in Ulster County Court to twenty (20) years to life following a June 17, 2022 conviction of Predatory Sexual Abuse Against a Child, a Class A-II felony. The conviction arises out of an investigation conducted by the Ulster County Family and Child Advocacy Center (FCAC) of Santiago's sexual abuse of a three-year-old child during which he also photographed the abuse.

The FCAC was assisted by members of the Town of Saugerties Police Department. The FCAC is comprised of members of the Ulster County District Attorney's Office, Town of Saugerties Police Department, Ulster County Sheriff's Office, New York State Police, Village of Ellenville Police Department and Ulster County Child Protective Services. The FCAC was established in 1995 as part of a joint effort of the Ulster County District Attorney's Office and Commissioner of Social Services to reduce the incidence of family violence in Ulster County. The FCAC has expanded its services over the past 25 years to continue to best serve the most vulnerable members of our community.

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“By securing this conviction, the FCAC and Ulster County DA’s Office sends a strong message to those in our community who seek to harm our children: they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” said **Jimmy McKoy, Senior Investigator and FCAC Director**. “I am proud of the FCAC’s continued efforts to bring all victim services together under one roof. Law enforcement officials are able to limit the level of ‘secondary trauma’ to children who previously had to repeatedly recount the details of the abuse during a criminal investigation, as was the case here.”

“This case has shaken all those who were involved in it; from the investigators, the case workers, and the victim’s advocates to the grand jurors who heard the evidence in this case”. **Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Culmone-Mills** said. “I want to thank the investigators for their dedication to this investigation and the grand jurors who spent many emotional and exhausting days hearing evidence in this case”. **Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Culmone-Mills** said. “When members of the community are selected to serve on a grand jury, they hear about crimes that are committed by and perpetrated against other members of our community, and that is hard in and of itself, but when they hear testimony and see images showing a 27-year-old man sexually assaulting a toddler, this creates a level of trauma that is forever imprinted. Nonetheless that trauma pales in comparison to the trauma that the victim will endure for the rest of their childhood and their adult life. It also pales in comparison to the trauma the child’s mother has been dealing with every day since she learned of the sexual abuse. This is a trauma that every mother can feel in their gut, it is horrifying and unimaginable”. **Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Culmone-Mills** said.

“The victim’s mother showed an unimaginable strength for her child. She is the epitome of a strong mother who pulled all her willpower to hold this defendant accountable for his heinous act against her child”. **Assistant District Attorney Jenna Hastings** said of the victim's mother who spoke during today's sentencing.

“The defendant has murdered his victim’s childhood. He can’t control himself and has no insight as to why. That, coupled with his intelligence, makes him a special kind of dangerous”. **Judge Bryan Rounds** said during today's sentencing.

“This sentence is a strong message from the community, that we will not stand for sexual violence to be perpetrated against anyone, especially the most vulnerable members of our society, our children, who we all have a duty to protect”. **District Attorney Dave Clegg** said.

The prosecution of this case was handled by **Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Culmone-Mills** and **Assistant District Attorney Jenna Hastings** of the Special Victims Bureau. Santiago was represented by **Chief Assistant Public Defender Cliff Owens** of the Ulster County Public Defender’s Office.

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