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Douglas County Teacher Sentenced to 14 Years in Prison for Sexual Exploitation of a Child

Douglas County, CO –A 45-year-old former teacher at STEM Highlands Ranch has been sentenced to fourteen years in the Department of Corrections for sexually exploiting a child.

Tera Johnson-Swartz pleaded guilty to sexual exploitation of a child and one count of a felony cybercrime. The charges stem from an inappropriate relationship with a 16-year-old student, that escalated into a sexual relationship.

Johnson-Swartz initiated contact by sending music and text messages to her student. In January of 2025, after weeks of communication, she convinced the student to meet up with her outside of school, provided him with cigarettes, and sexually assaulted him. Subsequent meetings included additional sexual assaults.

In February of 2025, Detectives with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office Special Victims Unit arrested Johnson-Swartz on charges of kidnapping and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Additional charges, includes Sexual Assault on a Child by one in a position of trust, were later added.

“We are grateful for the tireless work of our Special Victims Unit and the dedication of the District Attorney’s office in taking this case so seriously,” said Douglas County Sheriff Darren Weekly. “Their commitment ensures that those who prey on our most vulnerable-

our children-are held fully accountable. Protecting our youth will always remain one of our top priorities.”

District Attorney George Brauchler agreed, saying, “Douglas County has some of the finest teachers in Colorado- I know, because like many parents in our community- I have entrusted my four kids to be taught by them,” said Brauchler. This warning is coming from a DA and a parent: if a teacher in our community exploits their position of trust with our kids for their own lascivious desires, we will seek to change their life forever. We will work to make them a convicted felon, and we will try to take away their freedom. Here, this predator stated at her sentencing that this conduct will not define who she is. I disagree. She is now a convicted sex offender and will live with that label for decades. For those keeping track, this marks the fourth teacher convicted of a felony sex offense by our office since we came into existence last year. So far, all have been incarcerated.”

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