



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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Contact: Joey Buttitta
Title: Communications Manager/PIO
Phone: (805) 767-3400
Email: Joey.Buttitta@ventura.org

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**Ventura Man Sentenced for Attempted Murder of Child
& Lewd Act on Dependent Adult**

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Joel James Gonzales (DOB 02/11/96), of Ventura, was sentenced to 16 years 8 months in state prison. He previously pled guilty to one count of felony lewd acts on a dependent adult and was convicted by a jury on July 22, 2024, of the attempted murder of a six-year-old girl, felony assault with intent to commit rape during a burglary, and misdemeanor aggravated trespassing. Several special allegations and aggravating factors were also found true, including Gonzales causing great bodily injury in commission of a felony, the crime involving great violence, the victim being vulnerable, and the defendant taking advantage of a position of trust.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Tom Steele, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Unit, prosecuted the case.

"The defendant purposefully preyed upon the most vulnerable in our community when he committed these terrible acts of violence," Mr. Steele said. "But despite their vulnerabilities, the victims in these cases fought back bravely during the attacks. They also demonstrated tremendous courage by choosing to confront their attacker again while testifying during the trial. I am grateful for those members of the jury who diligently worked to provide justice and make the victims' sacrifices worthwhile."

On October 15, 2020, Gonzales was employed as a caretaker at the Royal Gardens elder care facility in Camarillo. The facility was separated into two areas: assisted living and memory care. Gonzales worked almost exclusively with patients suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. During his evening shift, Gonzales assaulted two victims at the facility. He cornered his first victim inside of her room on the assisted living side of the complex. Gonzales attacked the victim several times,

pushing her down on the bed, and attempting to remove her clothing. The victim fought back, and Gonzales eventually left the room.

After attacking the first victim, Gonzales returned to the memory care side of the facility where he turned his attention to a 90-year-old female resident with dementia. He walked the second victim to a storage closet, locked the victim inside, and performed lewd acts on the victim before staff started knocking on the door.

On October 16, 2020, Gonzales crawled through the doggy door of a Camarillo house, surprising the homeowner. Gonzales was told to leave but refused. He wandered around the house until a deputy with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office arrived. Gonzales was arrested and transported to jail. He was released from custody later that evening and picked up by family. They allowed Gonzales to stay the night at their home in Camarillo. That night, a six-year-old girl was having her first sleepover with the family's daughter.

Around 5:00 a.m. on October 17, 2020, family members heard loud banging noises coming from the room where the two young girls were sleeping. A teenager in the home was the first to investigate and saw Gonzales violently beating and choking the six-year-old victim in her sleeping bag. The teenager rushed at Gonzales, knocking him off the victim. The parents at the home held Gonzales down and 911 was called. When deputies arrived, the young victim was in and out of consciousness, her face was bloodied and swollen. She was taken to a local hospital. She survived the attack but suffered brain trauma.

Case: 2020029915

Defendant Information:

Joel James Gonzales (DOB 02/11/96)
Ventura

Charges convicted of by jury:

- PC 664/187(a) – Attempted murder
- PC 220(b) – Assault with intent to commit rape during a burglary
- PC 602.5(b) – Aggravated trespass

Charge pled guilty to:

- PC 288(c)(2) – Lewd act on dependent adult

Special Allegations:

- PC 12022.7(a) – Great bodily injury in commission of felony
- CRC 4.421(a)(1) – The crime involved great violence
- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable

CRC 4.421(a)(11) – The defendant took advantage of a position of trust

