



ERIK NASARENKO
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE



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Jury Convicts Lancaster Man of Human Trafficking, Abusing Young Woman

VENTURA Calif. – Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that a jury has found Jalen Amir Yoakum (DOB 08/07/00), of Lancaster, guilty of multiple felony charges for trafficking, exploiting, and abusing a young woman over several months. The jury convicted Yoakum on June 29, 2026, of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, pimping, pandering by encouragement, corporal injury to a cohabitant, and dissuading a witness by force or threat. Several special allegations and aggravating factors were found true, including that Yoakum has a prior strike conviction, engaged in violent conduct, targeted a particularly vulnerable victim and involved another person in the commission of the crimes.

Yoakum met the victim through Instagram in July 2024, and the two began dating shortly thereafter. After initially presenting himself as caring and respectful, Yoakum became increasingly controlling and physically abusive once they began living together. The victim testified that Yoakum repeatedly assaulted and strangled her while isolating her from family and friends. Without legitimate employment, Yoakum pressured and coerced her into commercial sex work despite her objections. Fearing additional violence, she complied with his demands.

Yoakum created online advertisements using the victim's photographs, communicated with prospective sex buyers, arranged commercial sex appointments, dictated where she would go and what services she would perform, and demanded she turn over nearly all of the money she earned. He threatened and physically assaulted her if appointments took longer than he expected or if she failed to satisfy his demands.

In January 2025, the victim made plans for a trip to Camarillo. Before arriving for an appointment, Yoakum struck her multiple times, leaving visible injuries to her face and body. While she was inside the appointment, Yoakum drove away in her vehicle and committed a series of separate crimes that resulted in his arrest after a high-speed pursuit through Camarillo. During that

investigation, the victim disclosed the abuse to law enforcement. Subsequent search warrants uncovered digital evidence, including online advertisements, text messages, and location data that corroborated the trafficking operation and Yoakum's control over the victim.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Rikole Kelly, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Unit, prosecuted the case.

"This verdict recognizes the victim's courage and the brutality she survived," Ms. Kelly said.

"Human trafficking does not always look like chains or locked doors. In this case, it hid under the guise of a relationship and was enforced through violence, fear, shame, and control."

Yoakum also faces separate charges in another Ventura County case stemming from the January 24, 2025, high-speed pursuit, which ended in a violent collision that seriously injured another driver. That case is scheduled for trial in early July 2026.

Yoakum is scheduled to be sentenced for the current case on July 21, 2026, in courtroom 25 of the Ventura County Superior Court. Yoakum remains in custody without bail and faces a maximum of 46 years in state prison.

Case: 2025002312

Defendant Information:

Jalen Amir Yoakum (DOB 08/07/00)
Lancaster

Charges convicted of:

- PC 236.1(b) – Human trafficking sexual exploitation
- PC 266h(a) – Pimping
- PC 266i(a)(2) – Pandering by encouraging
- PC 273.5(a) – Corporal injury to spouse/cohabitant
- PC 136.1(c)(1) – Dissuading a witness by force or threat

Special allegations found true:

- PC 1170(h)(3) – Prior serious or violent felony
- PC 12022.1(b) – Commission of a felony after release on bail or own recognizance
- PC 667S2 – Prior strike
- CRC 4.421(b)(2) – The defendant's prior convictions are numerous or of increasing seriousness
- CRC 4.421(a)(3) – Victim was vulnerable
- CRC 4.421(a)(8) – The manner in which the crime was carried out indicates planning, sophistication, and professionalism
- CRC 4.421(a)(4) – The defendant induced another to participate
- CRC 4.421(b)(1) – Defendant has engaged in violent conduct

