

Massachusetts man pleads guilty to possessing over 8,000 images and videos of child pornography

A Chicopee man pleaded guilty on Friday, Nov. 22, 2019, in federal court in Springfield to receiving child pornography.

Victor Stepus, 51, pleaded guilty to three counts of receipt of child pornography and one count of possession of child pornography. U.S. District Court Judge Mark G. Mastroianni scheduled sentencing for Feb. 20, 2020. Stepus has been in custody since his arrest in August 2015.

A search of Stepus's residence resulted in the seizure of a personal computer that contained over 8,000 images and 33 videos of child pornography. These included images depicting the sexual abuse, including bondage, of girls as young as eight years old. During an interview with agents, Stepus admitted that, for the past several years, he used his home computer to access and download child pornography two to three times per week.

The charge of receipt of child pornography provides a minimum mandatory sentence of five years and up to 20 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release, a fine of \$250,000, forfeiture and restitution, on each count. The charge of possession of child pornography provides a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release, a fine of \$250,000, forfeiture and restitution. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Joseph R.

Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; and Chicopee Police Chief William R. Jebb made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Alex J. Grant of Lelling's Springfield Branch Office is prosecuting the case.

The case is brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.