

Walpole Man Pleads Guilty to Sexually Exploiting Two Children

A Walpole man pleaded guilty on Monday, April 23, in federal court in Boston to producing child pornography.

Steven Bennett, 52, pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual exploitation of children. U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs scheduled sentencing for July 18, 2018. Bennett has been in custody since his arrest in May 2017.

On May 25, 2017, as a result of an April 2017 investigation into various individuals seeking nude pictures of underage girls via Craigslist, authorities executed a federal search warrant at Bennett's home. Bennett admitted that he secretly video recorded two minor females who were known to him. Subsequent forensic analysis of several devices seized from Bennett during the search revealed more than 100 videos of the girls in the nude.

The charges of sexual exploitation of children each provide for a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years and up to 30 years in prison, a minimum of five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based on the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling and Michael Shea, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Anne Paruti, Lelling's Project Safe Childhood Coordinator and a member of the Major Crimes Unit, is prosecuting the case.

This case was 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 U.S. Attorneys' Offices and 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/.