



Department of Justice

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District of North Dakota

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State Psychologist Who Worked with Sex Offenders
Sentenced for Child Pornography

FARGO - United States Attorney Drew Wrigley announced that on January 23, 2009, **Dr. Joseph Belanger** of Jamestown, North Dakota, was sentenced before United States District Court Judge Ralph R. Erickson on charges that he received and possessed materials involving the sexual exploitation of minor children.

Judge Erickson sentenced **Dr. Belanger** to seven years in federal prison to be followed by a lifetime of supervised release. **Dr. Belanger** was ordered to pay a \$200 special assessment to the Crime Victim's Fund.

Dr. Belanger, 61, pleaded guilty on October 3, 2008, to possessing and receiving over 3,000 images of child pornography and over 200 videos of child pornography. Federal authorities launched an investigation of Dr. Belanger in 2006 after it was determined that he had purchased access to commercial websites containing images and videos of child pornography. United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents obtained a search warrant for **Dr. Belanger's** residence in Jamestown and seized

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various electronic media containing thousands of child pornography images.

Dr. Belanger told ICE agents that he was a psychologist with the North Dakota State Hospital and he admitted that during his work with sex offenders he developed an interest in child pornography. **Dr. Belanger** stated that his interest eventually led to his downloading and viewing child pornography.

In response to **Belanger's** sentence, United States Attorney Drew Wrigley said, "Dr. Belanger's work made him painfully aware of the horrible crimes and violence that are central to child pornography production and distribution. Still, he chose to shovel money into the child pornography industry that causes young children and infants to be sexualized, violated, and brutalized in the most horrifying manners imaginable. The Belanger prosecution is another example of our Project Safe Childhood initiative bringing justice to the doorstep of those whose actions are robbing children of their innocence."

Michael Mach, Resident Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Grand Forks said, "ICE aggressively targets those who prey on innocent victims, especially those who hold positions of public trust. We will continue to work closely and aggressively with the U. S. Attorney's Office to investigate and prosecute those who exploit children by collecting these illicit materials."

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The case was investigated by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer Klemetsrud Puhl prosecuted the case.

This case was brought as a part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood combines federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

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