



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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EL PASO MAN DETAINED ON FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY PRODUCTION CHARGE

United States Attorney Robert Pitman and FBI Special Agent in Charge Mark Morgan announced that in El Paso this morning, a federal magistrate ordered that 46-year-old Joe Tapia, III, of El Paso remain in federal custody pending trial for production of child pornography.

A federal criminal complaint filed on Wednesday alleges that Tapia, an Excel Learning Center (ELC) admissions service representative, had images of child pornography as well as a sexually explicit instant messenger chat with a 16-year-old male on his work computer. According to the complaint, Tapia, who is also a local church youth minister, allegedly recorded three individuals while they were changing clothes prior to a church performance. On Tuesday, special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation executed a search warrant at his residence and arrested Tapia without incident.

Upon conviction, Tapia faces between 15 years and 30 years in federal prison. Tapia remains in federal custody pending trial per an order issued today by United States Magistrate Judge Norbert Garney.

It is important to note that a criminal complaint is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation together with the El Paso Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney J. Brandy Gardes is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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