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Pender County Man Sentenced for Statutory Rape

On March 13, 2026, Antonio Hernandez, age 32 of Rocky Point, pled guilty to statutory rape of a person who is 15 years old or younger. The Honorable R. Kent Harrell sentenced Hernandez to 156-248 months in the Department of Adult Correction.

Hernandez was living next door to the 14-year-old victim. He had been touching her inappropriately for approximately two years and raped her once in the month prior to the victim disclosing the sexual abuse at school in April of 2024. Once the victim reported sexual abuse, Deputy Garcia and Sgt. Clinard with the Pender County Sheriff's Office immediately began an investigation into the matter. The victim was forensically interviewed at the Carousel Center and received a physical examination where there were findings consistent with the sexual abuse she had described. Deputy Garcia was able to contact Hernandez using the victim's phone where Hernandez admitted to having sexual intercourse with the victim.

"This abuse came to light because the victim in this case was able to turn to a trusted adult at school and disclose what was happening to her," remarked District Attorney Jason W. Smith. "The work of the school official, Deputy Garcia and Sgt. Clinard of the Pender County Sheriff's Office, and the Carousel Center, this sex offender will spend the next 13 years behind bars."



Antonio Hernandez