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October 21, 2022  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**COWETA COUNTY JURY CONVICTS RICHARD KEITH NELMS OF INCEST, RAPE, AGGRAVATED CHILD MOLESTATION, AND CHILD MOLESTATION**

On October 20, 2022, a Coweta County jury found Richard Keith Nelms, 38, guilty of Incest, Rape, Child Molestation, and Aggravated Child Molestation. Coweta County Superior Court Judge Emory Palmer presided over the three-day trial, and sentenced Nelms to 50 years to serve in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by a consecutive life sentence. Suffice it to say, this defendant will never be able to harm another child.

Assistant District Attorney Jared Parrish prosecuted the case with the assistance of lead investigator Sgt. Shawna Wade of the Coweta County Sheriff's Office.

The evidence presented during the trial showed that Nelms raped, orally sodomized, and repeated molested his biological daughter, from the age of seven until she was ten years old, typically while the child's mother was a work. The abuse began while Nelms was still married to the child's mother, and continued after their separation and divorce.

The investigation began on June 19, 2019, when the victim's mother – to whom the victim had disclosed the abuse – contacted both the Division of Family and Children Services (DFACS) and the Coweta County Sheriff's Office. As part of Sgt. Shawna Wade's investigation, the child was forensically interviewed at Twins Cedars Child Advocacy Center in Lagrange, at which time the child disclosed details of the abuse by her father. A sexual assault examination was performed on the child, revealing evidence consistent with the child's disclosure of sexual abuse. Nelms was arrested on July 11, 2019, where he remained in custody at the Coweta County Jail awaiting trial.

At trial, the victim, now 14 years old, bravely testified about the years of abuse she endured. While there was evidence to corroborate her testimony, the victim was the only person who could testify to what she experienced, which is the reality of most sex-crime cases. The DA's Office is in awe of this victim's courage and perseverance through years of abuse and through her testimony in the courtroom. We thank all who participated in seeing that justice was done in this case.

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