



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Michael T. Dougherty, District Attorney

For Immediate Release
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Contact: Shannon Carbone
Phone: 303-441-3804
scarbone@bouldercounty.org

Press Release

On September 12, 2023, a 13-year-old female was walking home from middle school when the suspect, later identified as Cole Priest, forcefully pushed her to the ground and then covered her mouth with his hand when she began to yell for help, kick, and push him away. The victim was eventually able to stand up and run away, ultimately getting home and immediately calling the police. The Boulder County Sheriff's Office responded and based on their extensive efforts, located Mr. Priest and placed him under arrest.

A search of Priest's criminal history revealed a 2018 Boulder case resulting in misdemeanor charges of Unlawful Sexual Contact, Assault in the Third Degree, and Harassment. In that case, the victim described being followed by Priest for several blocks before he grabbed her from behind, pinned her arms up against her body, reached down and forcefully grabbed her buttocks and caused her pain. After pushing him away, Priest chased after her for several blocks as she ran away towards her home.

The District Attorney's Office has received multiple media requests for information related to the current case as well as Mr. Priest's prior 2018 case.

In that 2018 case, his attorney raised competency issues and the Court found him incompetent to proceed. That finding of incompetence remained for the next two and a half years while Priest was ordered to engage in restoration proceedings, including mental health support services. In September of 2020, Priest's attorney requested the Court terminate the pending criminal case against him based on the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo's (CMHIP) determination that Mr. Priest remained incompetent to proceed, and their further finding that there was not a substantial probability that he would be restored to competency in the foreseeable future. CMHIP determined, however, that he did not meet the criteria for civil commitment.

The District Attorney's Office strenuously objected to the dismissal of his charges, demanded a hearing, and offered evidence at that hearing to keep the case active so, at a minimum, Mr. Priest would continue to receive restoration treatment and medication. However, despite our office's strong opposition to a dismissal, the Court dismissed the charges in November 2020.

Based on the significant safety concerns posed by Mr. Priest, on September 13, 2023, the District Attorney's Office argued for a \$100,000 cash only bond. The Court set a \$50,000 cash, surety, or property bond with conditions of no contact with the victim, no possession of weapons, and continued mental health treatment. Although Mr. Priest was only charged with misdemeanor offenses at the time of this new arrest, the District Attorney's Office will be working closely with the victim and law enforcement to ensure the appropriate charges and outcome. Our office is already in contact with the victim's family.

DA Michael Dougherty stated, "I want to acknowledge the courage and strength of the young victim, as well as the rapid response by law enforcement. This situation with the prior case demonstrates numerous concerns, including the lack of adequate mental health treatment throughout Colorado and the impact on community safety. Our office is committed to fighting for the right outcome in this case."

As in every criminal case, these charges are merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty.