

# Chicago man faces child exploitation charges in Massachusetts

A Chicago man was arrested Wednesday and charged with sexual exploitation of children and receipt of child pornography.

Ernesto Herrera, 32, of Chicago, Ill., was charged by criminal complaint with one count of sexual exploitation of children and one count of receipt of child pornography. Following an initial appearance in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois yesterday, Herrera was detained pending a detention hearing scheduled for Monday, June 7, 2021. He will appear in Boston at a later date.

According to the charging documents, in June 2020, Herrera allegedly threatened and manipulated a Massachusetts minor via Snapchat and text message to make and send videos and images of the victim engaged in sexual conduct, among other things. The investigation determined that the phone number and Snapchat account used to contact the victim belonged to Herrera. A subsequent search of Herrera's phone revealed that the victim sent over one thousand media files to Herrera's Snapchat account. Several of those media files allegedly depicted child pornography

The charge of sexual exploitation of children provides a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years and up to 30 years in prison, at least five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of receipt of child pornography provides for a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and up to 20 years in prison, at least five years and up to a lifetime of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory

factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Emmerson Buie, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Chicago Division; and John R. Lausch, Jr., United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Mackenzie Duane of Mendell's Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.

The case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In 2006, the Department of Justice created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov/](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov/).

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.