

Office of the
**MERCED COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

Chief Deputy District Attorney
MATTHEW T. SERRATTO

Chief Deputy District Attorney
DAVID R. ELGIN

Interim Chief Deputy District Attorney
THOMAS M. PFEIFF



District Attorney
KIMBERLY R. H. LEWIS

Chief Investigator
BIMLEY WEST, JR

Director of Administrative Services
SARA N. MILLER

Victim Witness Program Director
LISA DeSANTIS

PRESS RELEASE

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

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Contact: Angelica Lozano

Number: (209) 385-7381

Merced County Jury Convicts Leonardo Mondragon Hernandez

On Tuesday, April 27, 2022, a Merced County jury returned guilty and true verdicts on all charged offenses against Leonardo Mondragon Hernandez of Merced, California. Mr. Hernandez was found by the jury to have sexually abused a close family member and two additional victims who were the children of family friends.

In February of 2019, one of the victims came forward and reported sexual abuse that began at the age of three or four years and continued into their teens. During the investigation, two additional children were identified as victims Mr. Hernandez assaulted during 2004.

At trial, all three victims testified about Mr. Hernandez' behavior with them. The jury also heard testimony from the mother of the first victim and the father the second and third victims. Merced County Superior Court Judge Carol Ash presided over the trial and is scheduled to sentence Mr. Hernandez on June 16, 2022. Mr. Hernandez was convicted of oral copulation with a child under the age of 10, a violation of Penal Code, Section 288.7 (b); one count of sexual penetration with a child under the age of 10, a violation of Penal Code, Section 288.7 (b); two counts of aggravated sexual assault of a child, violations of Penal Code, Section 269 (a)(4) and Penal Code, Section 269(a)(5); and two counts of lewd and lascivious acts against a child under 14, violations of Penal Code, Section 288(a). He faces a possible 90 years to life, plus 8 years in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Then Merced Police Department Detective Joseph Opinski, who is now an agent with the California from the Department of Justice, lead the investigation. Deputy District Attorney Angelica Lozano prosecuted the case. Victim Witness Advocate Erika Navarro has and will continue to assist the families as case advances through sentencing and beyond.