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For Immediate Release

Iowa City Man Convicted of Sexual Abuse of a Child

October 8, 2025 (JOHNSON COUNTY, IA) – On Friday, October 3, in Iowa District Court, Chief District Judge Lars Andersen found Robert Seals, 47, of Iowa City, guilty of Sexual Abuse in the 2nd Degree – of a Child – 1st Offense, a Class B Felony, following a bench trial that took place during the week of July 29, 2025. Seals faces a sentence of up to 25 years in prison with a mandatory minimum of 17.5 years. Seals was found not guilty of a related charge of Distribution of a Schedule I or II Controlled Substance to a Person Under Age 18, a Class B Felony.

The conviction comes from a November 2, 2022, incident where Seals and a co-defendant provided drugs and alcohol to the then 13-year-old victim and forced her to have sex with each of them in a vehicle.

Seals is scheduled to be sentenced on November 7, 2025. Co-defendant Stephen Ross, 28, of Iowa City, has pled guilty to the offense of Lascivious Acts with a Child, a Class C Felony, and is currently serving up to 10 years in prison.

This case was investigated by the Iowa City Police Department and prosecuted by Assistant Johnson County Attorney Oubonh White.

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IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

STATE OF IOWA,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	No. FECR137976
)	
vs.)	FINDINGS OF FACT,
)	CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, & ,
ROBERT EARL SEALS)	VERDICT
)	
Defendant.)	

Seal is charged with sexual abuse in the second degree and distribution of a controlled substance to a minor, both class B felonies, as a result of an incident that occurred on November 22, 2022. The matter proceeded to a bench trial before the undersigned on July 30, 2025. Based on the evidence presented at trial, the court finds Seals guilty of sexual abuse in the second degree and not guilty of the offense of distribution of a controlled substance to a minor.

I. Background

D.Y. testified that on November 22, 2022, when she was age 13 (DOB 2/2/2009), she traveled by bus from Coralville to Iowa City to visit a friend. After arriving in Iowa City, she went to the Kum n Go convenience store located near the Town and Campus Apartments. While at Kum n Go, D.Y. testified she met two adult males. One, outside of the vehicle in the parking lot, who identified himself as "Drezen" asked her if she wanted to smoke. She replied yes and got into the rear of the vehicle. DY testified that another older male, who later identified himself as Robert, was in the vehicle.

Shortly after she got into the vehicle, D.Y. testified they drove to a Kwik

Star so Drezen, later identified as Stephen Moss, could buy alcohol. While Stephen was in Kwik Star, D.Y. testified that Robert got into the back seat. Stephen came back out, and they drove to a park, later identified as Terry Trueblood Park in Iowa City. While driving to the park, D.Y. stated that Robert forced her head onto his crotch and she performed oral sex on him. Additionally, D.Y. testified that Robert put his mouth on her left breast and left a mark.

D.Y. testified that at various points while in the vehicle a joint was passed around. She also testified that she drank alcohol that was purchased by Stephen at Kwik Star.

After arriving at Terry Trueblood, D.Y. testified that she had sexual intercourse with first Robert and then Stephen. With respect to Robert, D.Y. testified that before having sex, he asked her if she had ever had sex with a thirty-two-year-old. D.Y. testified she tried to resist and said no to no avail. After Robert finished he changed places with Stephen, who was in the front seat. Stephen then had sex with her.

D.Y. testified she did not remember much of what happened next until she was returned to Kum n Go. She then tried to get to her friend's and fell along the way.

At trial, D.Y. positively identified Seals as the older male in the vehicle who sexually assaulted her. Prior to trial, she was never asked to identify him.

Shortly after being dropped off at Kum n Go on November 22, 2022, law enforcement was contacted, and Officer Ashley Jay spoke to D.Y. and arranged

for her to be examined Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). Audrey Helt served as a SANE nurse in November 2022 and examined D.Y. the night of November 22. She testified that D.Y. was excitable and tearful. Nurse Helt observed a bruise on D.Y.'s left breast. She then used a light to identify possible places to swab. The light indicated possible ejaculation in D.Y.'s mouth and contact with the left breast. Nurse Helt took pictures and swabs. She swabbed D.Y.'s clavicle, breasts and mouth, and D.Y. herself performed vaginally swab. She also collected blood and urine samples and turned them over to the Iowa City Police Department, along with D.Y.'s underwear. D.Y. declined to turn over any of her other clothes for evidence.

Detective Ryan Wood testified that he assisted Detective Jennifer Clarahan with the investigation. He was asked to look for vehicles leaving Kum n Go. In particular, Detective Wood was asked to find a dark SUV. He used traffic camera footage and found a partial plate for a vehicle matching the one D.Y. got into at Kum n Go, a Dodge Durango. Eventually he was able to link the vehicle to Tonya Slater and then to the Defendant based on a call for service received by police on October 27 of 2022, where Robert Seals was identified as the driver of the Durango.

Detective Jennifer Clarahan with the Iowa City Police Department was the lead investigator on the case. She received a call from Officer Jay about the case on November 2 and then on November 3 went to Kum n Go to obtain and review video surveillance. The video shows D.Y. getting into the Durango with

an individual Detective Clarahan was later able to identify as Stephen Ross. She was able to identify Ross based on phone records linking him to the number he provided to D.Y. on November 2, and a tattoo described by D.Y. that Detective Clarahan was able to observe on a public Facebook post. The video shows the vehicle with D.Y. leaving Kum n Go at 4:15 PM.

Detective Clarahan also obtained and viewed surveillance videos from Kwik Star, both interior and exterior. Around 4:20 PM the video shows the Durango arriving at Kwik Star. Not long after the interior video shows Stephen purchasing a bottle of Black Velvet. The exterior video also shows Robert getting out of the front passenger seat in getting in the rear seat where D.Y. had sat when leaving Kum n Go.

Detective Clarahan eventually obtained a warrant to obtain a buccal swab from Seals. She spoke with him when she executed the warrant in late February 2023, and Seals admitted to fairly regular use of Tonya's Durango. He also admitted knowing Stephen Ross, Tonya's nephew, and driving around with him in the Durango. Seals admitted that sometimes he and Ross picked up people in the vehicle and that he had witnessed Ross having sex in the vehicle. Initially, Seals denied ever having sex in the vehicle but later stated that he had had sex with Tonya in the Durango at some point.

The buccal swab from Seal, swabs from D.Y., urine sample and other items collected by SANE nurse Helt were sent to the Iowa Department of Public Safety, DCI Criminalistics Laboratory for testing. Several different DCI

employees testified about the testing and results, which showed the following:

- D.Y.'s urine sample showed an alcohol level of 0.133.
- D.Y.'s urine sample was positive for cocaine metabolites but not marijuana metabolites. No determination could be made whether D.Y. had used marijuana nor, within a roughly three-day period, could it be determined when D.Y. had used cocaine.
- The DNA testing of D.Y.'s underwear was positive for seminal fluid with DNA from three different individuals. However, there is not enough DNA to make a comparison.
- The swab of D.Y.'s left breast had DNA factors from D.Y. and one other individual, the factor was too weak to develop profile.
- The swab of D.Y.'s right breast had DNA factors from D.Y. and two individuals, one of which was matched to Seals.
- The swab of the lower neck had DNA factors from two individuals but were too weak to develop profiles.

In addition to D.Y.'s testimony at trial, there is video of Officer Ashley Jay's initial interactions with D.Y., and there was evidence of statements made by D.Y. to SANE nurse Helt, evidence of statements D.Y. made during an interview she gave at the Child Protection Center, and statements D.Y. made in a deposition taken in November 2024. The evidence reveals some possible inconsistencies in D.Y.'s various accounts of what happened, as well as possibly with some of the other evidence, more or less accurately summarized by Defendant in his written closing argument. These include the following:

- D.Y. initially described the vehicle later identified as the Durango belonging to Tonya as being black in color. It is not.
- At trial D.Y. testified that she had performed oral sex on Robert on the way to the starting in the parking lot of Kwik Star and continuing on to

the park. At her deposition she testified that the oral sex occurred in the Kwik Star parking lot and that she cleaned up the ejaculate with her shirt.

- D.Y. testified that Robert used his mouth on her left nipple and left a bruise, while Seal's DNA was found on her right breast.

After the positive DNA match, Seals was charged in the pending case initiated.

Additional facts as necessary are included below.

II. Law & Analysis

To convict Seals of Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree, in violation of Iowa Code sections 709.1, 709.3(1)(b) and (c), 709.3(2).¹ the State must prove either:

- That Seals performed a sex act with D.Y.
- And that D.Y. was a child at the time.

OR

- That Seals performed a sex act with D.Y.
- And that the sex act was performed by force or against the will of D.Y.
- And that Seals was aided or abetted by one or more persons.

Sex acts are defined by Iowa Code section 702.17, and include:

- "Penetration of the penis into the vagina or anus;" and
- "Contact between the mouth and genitalia or mouth and anus or by contact between the genitalia of one person and the genitalia or anus of another person."

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all references herein are to the 2022 Code of Iowa.

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Iowa Code §§ 792.17(1)-(2).

For purposes of section 709.3(1)(b), a child is defined under Iowa law as being under the age of 14. Iowa Code § 702.5.

The Iowa Criminal Jury Instructions defines aiding and abetting as:

All persons involved in the commission of a crime, whether they directly commit the crime or knowingly "aid and abet" its commission, shall be treated in the same way.

"Aid and abet" means to knowingly approve and agree to the commission of a crime, either by active participation in it or by knowingly advising or encouraging the act in some way before or when it is committed. Conduct following the crime may be considered only as it may tend to prove the defendant's earlier participation. Mere nearness to, or presence at, the scene of the crime, without more evidence, is not "aiding and abetting". Likewise, mere knowledge of the crime is not enough to prove "aiding and abetting".

Iowa Criminal Jury Instruction 200.8.

Count two of the trial information charges Seals with the offense of Distribution of a Control Substance to Person(s) Under Age 18, a Class B Felony, in violation of Iowa Code section 124.406(1)(A). To convict Seals of this offense, the State must prove the following elements:

- That Seals delivered a controlled substance (alleged in this case to be marijuana and cocaine) to D.Y.
- At the time of the delivery, Seals was over the age of eighteen and D.Y. was under the age of eighteen.

The State is required to prove all necessary elements of each offense by proof beyond a reasonable doubt. See Iowa Code § 701.3 ("Every person is

presumed innocent until proved guilty. No person shall be convicted of any offense unless his or her guilt is proved beyond a reasonable doubt.”). Iowa

Criminal Jury Instruction 100.10 defines reasonable doubt as:

A reasonable doubt is one that fairly and naturally arises from the evidence in the case, or from the lack or failure of evidence produced by the State.

If, after a full and fair consideration of all the evidence, you are firmly convinced of the defendant's guilt, then you have no reasonable doubt and you should find the defendant guilty.

But if, after a full and fair consideration of all the evidence in the case, or from the lack or failure of evidence produced by the State, you are not firmly convinced of the defendant's guilt, then you have a reasonable doubt and you should find the defendant not guilty.

Iowa Criminal Jury Instruction 100.10. Here the State has met its burden as to Count I but not Count II.

As to Count I, while admittedly there are a fair number of inconsistencies between D.Y.’s trial testimony and prior statements she made, the court found D.Y.’s testimony to be extremely credible. The salient parts of D.Y.’s story have always been the same. When she was 13, she got into a car with two adult men to smoke marijuana. The men drove off and plied her with alcohol and had sexual contact with her against her will. The several minor inconsistencies are not at all surprising considering D.Y.’s age, the passage of time, the trauma associated with the crimes themselves, and D.Y.’s exposure to alcohol.² D.Y.

² At trial, D.Y. was asked about other statements she had made during her SANE examination and during her interview at the Child Protection Center, which she did not remember. Even if those additional statements had been inconsistent with her trial testimony, they as well would not change the fact that the gravamen of D.Y.’s account

has absolutely no motive for lying in this case, and the understandable inconsistencies do not tarnish D.Y.'s otherwise consistent and credible account of what happened.

Adding to the credibility of D.Y.'s account is the large amount of supporting evidence. This evidence includes:

- Video from Kum n Go and Kwik Star confirming D.Y.'s account of meeting at Kum n Go and traveling to Kwik Star.
- Video from Kwik Star showing Stephan's purchase of a bottle of Black Label, confirming D.Y.'s account of drinking something with "Black" on it. Additionally, D.Y.'s urine sample supports her account of drinking alcohol.
- Video from Kwik Star confirming D.Y.'s account of the older man, "Robert" getting into the back of the car.
- D.Y.'s identification of Seals at trial
- Seal's first name is Robert, the name reported by D.Y.
- Seals has significant connections with Stephan, the other individual involved and identified as being in the vehicle with D.Y., as well as to the Durango where the crime occurred.
- Seals' DNA was found on D.Y.'s breast strongly supporting his presence and D.Y.'s account of what happened.
- Seminal fluid and the DNA of three different individuals was found in D.Y.'s underwear, confirming her account of sexual intercourse.

Collectively, D.Y.'s credible testimony and the supporting testimony is overwhelming as to the offense of sexual abuse in the second degree, and the State has established that Seals performed a sex act with D.Y. on November 22,

has been consistent and is supported by other evidence.

2022, when D.Y. was 13 years old, both by forcing her to her perform oral sex on him and by having sexual intercourse with her.

As to Count II, the State has not established proof beyond reasonable doubt that Seals committed the offense of delivery of a controlled substance to a minor. The only drugs found in D.Y.'s system were the cocaine metabolites. The evidence is simply insufficient to establish that those metabolites came from drugs delivered by Seals. There were no marijuana or marijuana metabolites found in D.Y.'s system. The only evidence of possible marijuana comes from the very brief testimony by D.Y. However, the evidence is insufficient to support D.Y.'s experience with or knowledge regarding marijuana such as to enable her to make an identification of marijuana. The court suspects that the cocaine came from D.Y.'s interactions with Seals and she may have been given marijuana, but that suspicion does not establish his guilt by proof beyond reasonable doubt.

III. Verdict & Further Orders

For the reasons stated above and those stated in open court earlier today, the court finds Robert Seals guilty of the offense of Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree, in violation of Iowa Code sections 709.1, 709.3(1)(b) and (c), 709.3(2). Judgment and sentence are set at the Johnson County Courthouse for November 7, 2025, 1:30 PM before the undersigned.

The court finds Seals not guilty of the offense of Distribution of a Control Substance to Person(s) Under Age 18, a Class B Felony, in violation of Iowa Code section 124.406(1)(A).

The Court orders the 6th District Iowa Department of Corrections to prepare a Presentence Investigation Report with the report filed in the office of the **Johnson County Clerk of Court** no later than three days prior to the sentencing date. A copy shall be furnished to the Court, county attorney, and Defendant's attorney prior to the date of sentencing. Defendant is ordered to timely cooperate in preparation of the PSI, consistent with advice of counsel. If Defendant fails to cooperate in the preparation of the PSI, the Court may revoke Defendant's pretrial release or require the Defendant to appear and show cause as to why he is not in contempt. Defense counsel shall review the PSI with Defendant prior to the sentencing hearing, and Defendant should be prepared to suggest any necessary additions, corrections, or changes to the PSI.

Defendant may request the Court determine her/his ability to pay court costs, fees for court-appointed counsel, and any other category B restitution at the time of sentencing. If Defendant is seeking such a determination of category B restitution at the time of sentencing, the required affidavit must be filed before sentencing. Otherwise, Defendant must file the required affidavit and request for hearing no later than 30 days after the sentencing order is entered or s/he waives her/his right to have a determination made as to her/his ability to pay category B restitution.

The County Attorney's Office shall prepare a statement of pecuniary damages, if any, regarding this offense, or pursuant to plea agreement. The statement of pecuniary damages shall be filed with the Court **prior to the date**

and time set for sentencing or, with the Court's permission, may be filed up to 30 days after the sentencing.

The Clerk of Court shall prepare a statement of court costs in connection with this matter. That statement shall be provided to the presentence investigator, if any, and shall be made available to the Court prior to the time and date set for sentencing,

If Defendant has court-appointed counsel, the Clerk of Court also shall inform the Court of the amount of fees for services through the time of sentencing.

Defendant is advised that he may file a Motion in Arrest of Judgment and/or Motion for a New Trial. Any such motion must be filed within 45 days of the date this order was entered or no later than 5 days before sentencing, whichever comes first.

No bond is authorized pending sentencing pursuant to Iowa Code section 811.1.



State of Iowa Courts

Case Number
FECR137976
Type:

Case Title
STATE OF IOWA VS SEALS, ROBERT EARL
Order for PSI

So Ordered

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lars G. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Lars G. Anderson, Chief District Court Judge,
Sixth Judicial District of Iowa

Electronically signed on 2025-10-03 19:36:59