



Office of the
Johnson County Attorney

500 South Clinton Street • Suite 400 • Iowa City, IA 52240
Phone (319) 339-6100 • Fax (319) 339-6149

Rachel Zimmermann Smith
Johnson County Attorney

Susan D. Nehring
First Assistant County Attorney

Criminal

Jude T. Pannell
Michael K. Lang
Jeffrey W. Brunelle
Haley Huddleston
Oubonh P. White
Jacob D. Behnke
C. Chris Widmer
Katherine E. Schutz
Michael Acherkan

Juvenile

Emily Voss
Dan E. Williamson

Civil

Ryan A. Maas
Lynn M. Rose
Nathan H. Peters
David M. Van Comperolle

Child Support

1-(888) 229-9223

Contact: Rachel Zimmermann Smith, Johnson County Attorney

Contact Number: 319-339-6100

Contact Email: rzimmerm@johnsoncountyiowa.gov

For Immediate Release

Former UI Social Worker Sentenced to 15 Years for Sexually Exploiting Patients

April 16, 2026 (JOHNSON COUNTY, IA) – Today James Burkhalter, 46, of Coralville, Iowa, was sentenced to 15 years after pleading guilty in February to three counts of Sexual Exploitation by Counselor/Therapist, a Class D Felony.

Between March 2019 and January 2023, Burkhalter was working as a licensed social worker for the University of Iowa and provided mental health services to the victims when he sexually assaulted them. Burkhalter was first charged in July 2023 after the first victim came forward.

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

-END-

Attached: Sentencing Orders

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

52DOC

STATE OF IOWA, vs. JAMES DANIEL BURKHALTER	06521 FECR139020 Count1 CHANGE OF PLEA JUDGMENT AND SENTENCE
--	---

The defendant appears by written plea, with the approval of counsel, and asks permission to withdraw the previously entered plea of not guilty for the purpose of entering a plea of guilty to the crime of **Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor or Therapist in violation of Iowa Code 709.15(1) and 709.15(5)(a)**.

From an examination of the written plea, the Court finds it is voluntarily made with full knowledge of defendant's constitutional rights and of the potential penal consequences. From examining the trial information, the minutes of testimony, and the plea, the Court finds an adequate factual basis. Accordingly, the guilty plea is accepted by the Court and entered of record.

Defendant waives personal appearance at the time of sentencing and the right to file a motion in arrest of judgment and consents to the entry of immediate judgment and sentence. Accordingly,

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the Defendant is committed to the custody of the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections for an indeterminate term not to exceed five years with credit being given for any time previously served on this charge. Defendant's term of incarceration may be reduced by as much as half of the maximum sentence because of statutory good conduct time, work credits, and program credits. The Defendant may be eligible for parole before the sentence is discharged.

The Defendant shall be taken into custody by the Johnson County Sheriff and shall remain incarcerated to service this sentence.

This sentence shall be served consecutive to FECR142300 and FECR146620.

NO CONTACT ORDER: Any No Contact Order previously entered herein is extended for five years.

Pursuant to the provisions of Iowa Code Section 903B.2, the following special sentence is also imposed: the defendant is further committed to the custody of the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections for a period of **10 years**. This special sentence shall commence upon completion of the sentence imposed herein, and the defendant shall begin the sentence under supervision as if on parole. The defendant shall be placed on the Intermediate Sanctions Continuum pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 901B.

The Defendant is advised, pursuant to Iowa Code Section 901A.1 and 2, that this offense meets the definition of a sexually predatory offense for the purpose of enhancing future punishment for similar offenses.

Financial obligations

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the defendant be sentenced to pay a fine in the amount of \$1025 (SUSPENDED/WAIVED) plus 15% crime services surcharge, court costs, attorney fees, and victim restitution, if any. If restitution is sought, the County Attorney shall file a Statement of Pecuniary Damages within 30 days.

Defendant is granted 15 days after the filing of a Statement of Pecuniary Damages to file a written objection to restitution.

The Clerk shall assess the \$90 domestic/sexual abuse surcharge pursuant to Iowa Code Section 911.2B.

The Court finds that the Defendant is unable to pay a fine due to the prison sentence.

PAYMENT PLAN: Defendant shall pay amounts due in monthly installments of at least \$50.00 no later than the 16th day of each month beginning May 16, 2026 and continuing until paid in full. This finding is based upon a finding of indigency made by the Court prior to the date of sentencing or a motion and/or a financial affidavit filed prior to sentencing.

Payments may be made online at www.iowacourts.gov or through the Clerk of Court, Johnson County Courthouse, 417 South Clinton Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The Court finds that community service will be prudent and effective for defendant; therefore, defendant may elect to pay some or all of the amounts due through the performance of community service at the minimum wage rate (currently \$7.25). If defendant elects to perform community service, he/she must provide proof of completion of 7 hours of community service per month per each \$50 owed.

NOTICE: FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH PAYMENT ORDER

Defendant is notified that if he/she fails to pay as ordered above within 30 days of the due date, action regarding his/her motor vehicle registration or suspension of his/her driver's license, or both, may be initiated and the total remaining court debt will be considered delinquent and sent to the Johnson County Attorney for collection.

Pursuant to Iowa Code Section 81.2, the defendant shall submit a DNA sample for DNA profiling within 60 days. Failure to timely submit a DNA sample may result in Contempt of Court proceedings pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 665.

Sentence is imposed pursuant to the plea agreement between the parties and/or any applicable mandatory sentencing requirements, and/or pursuant to the reasons stated on the record.

Pursuant to the plea agreement, Counts 2-9 is/are dismissed, with costs assessed to the State.

Bond is exonerated. The Clerk shall allocate bond in accordance with authorization from the surety as set forth in the Authorization for Return of Cash Bond Following Arrest and Bond Information form, if any. If bond is currently subject to forfeiture, pending proceedings are cancelled.

Based upon the record, any updated financial information, and the authorization for a payment plan and community service, the Court finds that the defendant is reasonably able to pay Category B restitution (which may include filing fees, interpreter fees, service fees, court reporter fees, etc.) in the maximum amount of \$0.00 and court-appointed attorney fees and expenses in the amount of \$0.00. In addition, the defendant is ordered to pay Category B restitution to public agencies and/or the Crime Victim Compensation Program pursuant to the Statement of Pecuniary Damages unless a hearing is requested on reasonable ability to pay.

If counsel is court-appointed, the attorney and/or the attorney's office is withdrawn from representation in this matter upon satisfaction of the requirements of Iowa R. Crim. P. 2.30(1) without further order of the Court. To be removed from EDMS indexing, counsel should file a notice of withdrawal pursuant to Iowa R. Elec. P. 16.315(1) (d) and 16.318.

Any open warrants are recalled.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The defendant is advised of the right to appeal this judgment and sentence. An appeal must be filed with the Clerk of Court in writing within 30 days from the date of this order. If a notice of appeal is not timely filed, the right to appeal is waived. Defendant may qualify for court-appointed counsel and transcripts at State expense. Bond on appeal is set in the amount of \$5000.



State of Iowa Courts

Case Number
FECR139020
Type:

Case Title
STATE OF IOWA VS BURKHALTER, JAMES DANIEL
Order of Disposition

So Ordered

Jason A. Burns, District Associate Judge,
Sixth Judicial District of Iowa

Electronically signed on 2026-04-16 14:38:15

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

52DOC

STATE OF IOWA, vs. JAMES DANIEL BURKHALTER	06521 FECR142300 Count1 CHANGE OF PLEA JUDGMENT AND SENTENCE
--	---

The defendant appears by written plea, with the approval of counsel, and asks permission to withdraw the previously entered plea of not guilty for the purpose of entering a plea of guilty to the crime of **Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor or Therapist in violation of Iowa Code Section 709.15(1) and 709.15(5)(a)**.

From an examination of the written plea, the Court finds it is voluntarily made with full knowledge of defendant's constitutional rights and of the potential penal consequences. From examining the trial information, the minutes of testimony, and the plea, the Court finds an adequate factual basis. Accordingly, the guilty plea is accepted by the Court and entered of record.

Defendant waives personal appearance at the time of sentencing and the right to file a motion in arrest of judgment and consents to the entry of immediate judgment and sentence. Accordingly,

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the Defendant is committed to the custody of the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections for an indeterminate term not to exceed five years with credit being given for any time previously served on this charge. Defendant's term of incarceration may be reduced by as much as half of the maximum sentence because of statutory good conduct time, work credits, and program credits. The Defendant may be eligible for parole before the sentence is discharged.

This sentence shall be served consecutive to FECR139020 and FECR146620.

NO CONTACT ORDER: Any No Contact Order previously entered herein is extended for five years.

Pursuant to the provisions of Iowa Code Section 903B.2, the following special sentence is also imposed: the defendant is further committed to the custody of the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections for a period of **10 years**. This special sentence shall commence upon completion of the sentence imposed herein, and the defendant shall begin the sentence under supervision as if on parole. The defendant shall be placed on the Intermediate Sanctions Continuum pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 901B.

The Defendant is advised, pursuant to Iowa Code Section 901A.1 and 2, that this offense meets the definition of a sexually predatory offense for the purpose of enhancing future punishment for similar offenses.

Financial obligations

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the defendant be sentenced to pay a fine in the amount of \$1,025 (SUSPENDED/WAIVED) plus 15% crime services surcharge, court costs, attorney fees, and victim restitution, if any. If restitution is sought, the County Attorney shall file a Statement of Pecuniary Damages within 30 days.

Defendant is granted 15 days after the filing of a Statement of Pecuniary Damages to file a written objection to restitution.

The Clerk shall assess the \$90 domestic/sexual abuse surcharge pursuant to Iowa Code Section 911.2B.

The Court finds that the Defendant is unable to pay a fine due to the prison sentence.

PAYMENT PLAN: Defendant shall pay amounts due in monthly installments of at least \$50.00 no later than the 16th day of each month beginning May 16, 2026 and continuing until paid in full. This finding is based upon a finding of indigency made by the Court prior to the date of sentencing or a motion and/or a financial affidavit filed prior to sentencing.

Payments may be made online at www.iowacourts.gov or through the Clerk of Court, Johnson County Courthouse, 417 South Clinton Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The Court finds that community service will be prudent and effective for defendant; therefore, defendant may elect to pay some or all of the amounts due through the performance of community service at the minimum wage rate (currently \$7.25). If defendant elects to perform community service, he/she must provide proof of completion of 7 hours of community service per month per each \$50 owed.

NOTICE: FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH PAYMENT ORDER

Defendant is notified that if he/she fails to pay as ordered above within 30 days of the due date, action regarding his/her motor vehicle registration or suspension of his/her driver's license, or both, may be initiated and the total remaining court debt will be considered delinquent and sent to the Johnson County Attorney for collection.

Pursuant to Iowa Code Section 81.2, the defendant shall submit a DNA sample for DNA profiling within 60 days. Failure to timely submit a DNA sample may result in Contempt of Court proceedings pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 665.

Sentence is imposed pursuant to the plea agreement between the parties and/or any applicable mandatory sentencing requirements, and/or pursuant to the reasons stated on the record.

Pursuant to the plea agreement, Count 2 is/are dismissed, with costs assessed to the State.

Bond is exonerated. The Clerk shall allocate bond in accordance with authorization from the surety as set forth in the Authorization for Return of Cash Bond Following Arrest and Bond Information form, if any. If bond is currently subject to forfeiture, pending proceedings are cancelled.

Based upon the record, any updated financial information, and the authorization for a payment plan and community service, the Court finds that the defendant is reasonably able to pay Category B restitution (which may include filing fees, interpreter fees, service fees, court reporter fees, etc.) in the maximum amount of \$0.00 and court-appointed attorney fees and expenses in the amount of \$0.00. In addition, the defendant is ordered to pay Category

B restitution to public agencies and/or the Crime Victim Compensation Program pursuant to the Statement of Pecuniary Damages unless a hearing is requested on reasonable ability to pay.

If counsel is court-appointed, the attorney and/or the attorney's office is withdrawn from representation in this matter upon satisfaction of the requirements of Iowa R. Crim. P. 2.30(1) without further order of the Court. To be removed from EDMS indexing, counsel should file a notice of withdrawal pursuant to Iowa R. Elec. P. 16.315(1)(d) and 16.318.

Any open warrants are recalled.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The defendant is advised of the right to appeal this judgment and sentence. An appeal must be filed with the Clerk of Court in writing within 30 days from the date of this order. If a notice of appeal is not timely filed, the right to appeal is waived. Defendant may qualify for court-appointed counsel and transcripts at State expense. Bond on appeal is set in the amount of \$5000.



State of Iowa Courts

Case Number
FECR142300
Type:

Case Title
STATE OF IOWA VS BURKHALTER, JAMES DANIEL
Order of Disposition

So Ordered

Jason A. Burns, District Associate Judge,
Sixth Judicial District of Iowa

Electronically signed on 2026-04-16 14:23:31

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

52DOC

STATE OF IOWA, vs. JAMES DANIEL BURKHALTER	06521 FECR146620 CHANGE OF PLEA JUDGMENT AND SENTENCE
--	---

The defendant appears by written plea, with the approval of counsel, and asks permission to withdraw the previously entered plea of not guilty for the purpose of entering a plea of guilty to the crime of **Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor or Therapist in violation of Iowa Code 709.15(1), 709.15(2)(a)(1)**.

From an examination of the written plea, the Court finds it is voluntarily made with full knowledge of defendant's constitutional rights and of the potential penal consequences. From examining the trial information, the minutes of testimony, and the plea, the Court finds an adequate factual basis. Accordingly, the guilty plea is accepted by the Court and entered of record.

Defendant waives personal appearance at the time of sentencing and the right to file a motion in arrest of judgment and consents to the entry of immediate judgment and sentence. Accordingly,

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the Defendant is committed to the custody of the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections for an indeterminate term not to exceed five years with credit being given for any time previously served on this charge. Defendant's term of incarceration may be reduced by as much as half of the maximum sentence because of statutory good conduct time, work credits, and program credits. The Defendant may be eligible for parole before the sentence is discharged.

The Defendant shall be taken into custody by the Johnson County Sheriff and shall remain incarcerated to service this sentence.

This sentence shall be served consecutive to FECR139020 and FECR142300.

Financial obligations

IT IS THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT that the defendant be sentenced to pay a fine in the amount of \$1025 (SUSPENDED/WAIVED) plus 15% crime services surcharge, court costs, attorney fees, and victim restitution, if any. If restitution is sought, the County Attorney shall file a Statement of Pecuniary Damages within 30 days.

Defendant is granted 15 days after the filing of a Statement of Pecuniary Damages to file a written objection to restitution.

The Clerk shall assess the \$90 domestic/sexual abuse surcharge pursuant to Iowa Code Section 911.2B.

The Court finds that the Defendant is unable to pay a fine due to the prison sentence.

PAYMENT PLAN: Defendant shall pay amounts due in monthly installments of at least \$50.00 no later than the 16th day of each month beginning May 16, 2026 and continuing until paid in full. This finding is based upon a finding of indigency made by the Court prior to the date of sentencing or a motion and/or a financial affidavit filed prior to sentencing.

Payments may be made online at www.iowacourts.gov or through the Clerk of Court, Johnson County Courthouse, 417 South Clinton Street, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The Court finds that community service will be prudent and effective for defendant; therefore, defendant may elect to pay some or all of the amounts due through the performance of community service at the minimum wage rate (currently \$7.25). If defendant elects to perform community service, he/she must provide proof of completion of 7 hours of community service per month per each \$50 owed.

NOTICE: FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH PAYMENT ORDER

Defendant is notified that if he/she fails to pay as ordered above within 30 days of the due date, action regarding his/her motor vehicle registration or suspension of his/her driver's license, or both, may be initiated and the total remaining court debt will be considered delinquent and sent to the Johnson County Attorney for collection.

Pursuant to Iowa Code Section 81.2, the defendant shall submit a DNA sample for DNA profiling within 60 days. Failure to timely submit a DNA sample may result in Contempt of Court proceedings pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 665.

Sentence is imposed pursuant to the plea agreement between the parties and/or any applicable mandatory sentencing requirements, and/or pursuant to the reasons stated on the record.

Pursuant to the plea agreement, Count 2 and 3 is/are dismissed, with costs assessed to the State.

Bond is exonerated. The Clerk shall allocate bond in accordance with authorization from the surety as set forth in the Authorization for Return of Cash Bond Following Arrest and Bond Information form, if any. If bond is currently subject to forfeiture, pending proceedings are cancelled.

Based upon the record, any updated financial information, and the authorization for a payment plan and community service, the Court finds that the defendant is reasonably able to pay Category B restitution (which may include filing fees, interpreter fees, service fees, court reporter fees, etc.) in the maximum amount of \$0.00 and court-appointed attorney fees and expenses in the amount of \$0.00. In addition, the defendant is ordered to pay Category B restitution to public agencies and/or the Crime Victim Compensation Program pursuant to the Statement of Pecuniary Damages unless a hearing is requested on reasonable ability to pay.

If counsel is court-appointed, the attorney and/or the attorney's office is withdrawn from representation in this matter upon satisfaction of the requirements of Iowa R. Crim. P. 2.30(1) without further order of the Court. To be

removed from EDMS indexing, counsel should file a notice of withdrawal pursuant to Iowa R. Elec. P. 16.315(1) (d) and 16.318.

Any open warrants are recalled.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The defendant is advised of the right to appeal this judgment and sentence. An appeal must be filed with the Clerk of Court in writing within 30 days from the date of this order. If a notice of appeal is not timely filed, the right to appeal is waived. Defendant may qualify for court-appointed counsel and transcripts at State expense. Bond on appeal is set in the amount of \$5000.



State of Iowa Courts

Case Number
FECR146620
Type:

Case Title
STATE OF IOWA VS BURKHALTER, JAMES DANIEL
Order of Disposition

So Ordered

Jason A. Burns, District Associate Judge,
Sixth Judicial District of Iowa

Electronically signed on 2026-04-16 15:21:12