



CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy accused of beating 5-year-old in Lancaster



A roll of police tape is left on the windshield of a Los Angeles County sheriff's vehicle in November 2022. (Jae C. Hong / Associated Press)

BY JAMES QUEALLY, KERI BLAKINGER

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A Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy who had already been suspended was arrested earlier this month on suspicion of abusing his 5-year-old son, according to department officials and documents reviewed by The Times.

Jim Devoe, a deputy assigned to the Lancaster Station, was arrested on suspicion of felony child abuse on May 1, according to a Sheriff's Department spokesperson and a law enforcement source with knowledge of the investigation.

The source spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter with the media.

Authorities began investigating after Devoe texted the boy's mother to tell her the child had suffered injuries from falling off his bike, according to a document reviewed by The Times. The mother immediately went to Devoe's home to pick up both of their children and saw the boy had serious bruising and swelling on his face, the document shows.

Devoe and the child's mother are divorced but have two children in common, including the victim, according to the document.

When interviewed by Sheriff's Department investigators at an area hospital, the boy and his brother both said Devoe had punched the child, according to the document.

"The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department expects all of its members to hold themselves to the highest ethical and professional standards at all times," the department said in a statement. "Department members who engage in misconduct, especially criminal misconduct that preys on a vulnerable population, will not be tolerated and will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Devoe could not be reached for comment, and it was not immediately clear whether he had an attorney. Records show he was released later that day on \$100,000 bail.

The Assn. for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, which represents rank-and-file deputies, said it was unaware of the case.

“The allegations, if true, obviously do not reflect the values of our organization,” said Richard Pippin, ALADS president. “That said, anyone accused of wrongdoing is entitled to due process and deserves to start with a presumption of innocence, regardless of their chosen profession.”

Tiffany Blacknell, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County district attorney’s office, said the case was still under review for filing. Sheriff’s investigators also presented prosecutors with a criminal case for negligence against Devoe’s girlfriend, who is a clerk in the Antelope Valley Courthouse, “based on the fact that she was present as a guardian/girlfriend of parent and failed to provide adequate medical care,” according to the document.

Devoe has been on administrative leave for several months, according to the document reviewed by The Times. A law enforcement source said the deputy was suspended due to a use-of-force incident and an allegation that he possessed illegal steroids.

Records show Devoe began working for the Sheriff’s Department in 2015. Three years later, while attempting to pull over a speeder on Lancaster Boulevard, Devoe caused a three-car crash when he made an unsafe left turn and rammed into another vehicle. One driver was hospitalized. Devoe was not wearing his seatbelt at the time of the crash, but he was not injured, [according to a county report](#).

Afterward, one of the drivers sued, and the county settled for \$125,000. It’s not clear whether he faced any disciplinary action, as [many types of law enforcement disciplinary records](#) are not public in California.



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Keri Blakinger covers the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. Before joining the Los Angeles Times in 2023, she spent nearly seven years in Texas, first covering criminal justice for the Houston Chronicle and then covering prisons for the Marshall Project. Her work has appeared everywhere from the BBC to the New York Daily News, from Vice to the Washington Post Magazine, where her 2019 reporting on women in jail helped earn a National Magazine Award. She is the author of "Corrections in Ink," a 2022 memoir about her time in prison.