

First Watch: Stuff You Should Know

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By Ted Streuli

There's a sign at the Lexington Assessment and Reception Center, the check-in place for felons moving from county jails to Department of Corrections facilities. It reads, "Protect the Public. Protect the Inmates."

No one protected David Coker.

Just the opposite: A corrections officer directed inmates to assault him; not once, but twice on the day he arrived at Lexington. After the second severe beating, Coker was taken to the prison's medical facility, then to a Purcell hospital where a CT scan showed there was, at least, no bleeding in his brain.

As [Keaton Ross reported](#), a Lexington guard told inmates Coker, convicted of rape, had twice sexually assaulted his niece.

The guard said to prisoners he wished he could assault Coker himself, but couldn't, encouraging the prisoners to handle the task for him.

They did. Twice.

A [DOC investigation](#) recommended conspiracy and negligence of duty charges be filed against four corrections officers and that charges be brought against two inmates. Cleveland County District Attorney Greg Mashburn filed only misdemeanor conspiracy to commit assault charges against four guards, Matthew Sinnett, Eric Cramer, Cody Cross and Sean Skarecky.

Sinnett and Cramer pleaded no contest to the charge. Sinnett received a 45-day suspended sentence, a \$100 fine and 10 hours of community service. He received a 10-day unpaid suspension for his involvement in the incident. Cramer received a year's probation with adjudication deferred until June 2025. Sinnett and Cramer were fired in June 2023.

The criminal cases against Cross and Skarecky are pending.

Corrections officials did not discipline Skarecky.

Before providing a copy of the investigator's report, the Department of Corrections redacted the name of the guard who claimed Coker had assaulted his niece and instigated the beatings.

Ed. Note: *This newsletter was updated on June 5, 2024, to correct the case status of the accused.*