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## W.Va. Pastor Pleads Guilty to Sexually Abusing 14-Y-O Family Member



(Photo: WSAZ)

West Virginia pastor James Winnell pleaded guilty on Jan. 6, 2013 to three counts of sexual abuse against a young, female family member.

By [Morgan Lee](#)

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A West Virginia pastor pleaded guilty on Jan. 6 to sexually abusing a 14-year-old, female family member.

Johnnie Winnell, 60, who formerly pastored United Gospel Mission in Elkview, W.Va., was arrested in April last year and charged with three counts of sexual abuse by a parent, guardian or custodian, reported [The WV Gazette](#).

Winnell admitted to investigators last year that there were three separate occurrences when he molested the girl while she slept in his home.

According to [The Charleston Daily Mail](#), Winnell told investigators he touched the victim "once under her clothes while she was lying on the couch with him" when he believed she was asleep. The second time, "he took her hand and 'swiped it across his crotch' over his clothes." In the last act, Winnell said that the victim had been sleeping in bed with him and his wife when he "touched her over her clothes."

Last year, the victim told a child advocacy worker that she believed she had been molested at least twice.

In addition to his job as a pastor, Winnell also served as a computer operator for the local school system's transportation office, where he worked on digital mapping for bus drivers.

Winnell's sentencing is scheduled for March 10, and he faces up-to five years in prison.

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