



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE
August 27, 2026
State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that **Neptali Cruz-Santos (DOB: 6/16/1990)** was found guilty of Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault after a bench trial before the Honorable Judge Debra Schafer.

In June of 2023, Rockford Police Officers responded to a residence in the 300 block of South Alpine Road for a sexual abuse complaint against the defendant, Neptali Cruz-Santos. A child victim disclosed that Cruz-Santos had inappropriate contact with them multiple times over two years. During the victim's testimony at trial, they shared how Cruz-Santos disguised the abuse as a game of "tag." Once the defendant caught the child, he would proceed to touch them in inappropriate places. The same victim told the court that they didn't realize the touch was inappropriate until years later when they viewed a video about Erin's Law in high school. Erin's Law requires that all public schools implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program. The program teaches students in grades PreK – 12th grade, age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and tell a trusted adult.

Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault is a Class X Felony that is punishable by an extended sentence of 6-60 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by three years to natural life of mandatory supervised release. The sentence must be served at 85%.

Cruz-Santos is scheduled to be back in court for post-trial motions on September 28, 2026, before Judge Schafer in Courtroom 317 of the Winnebago County Courthouse.

The Rockford Police Department conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant State's Attorney Emily Palmer and Jennifer Gadow are handling the prosecution.

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