



J. HANLEY

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

PRESS RELEASE

July 15, 2026

State's Attorney J. Hanley

Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley announces that **William E. Acton (DOB: 10/27/1976)** was found guilty of two counts of Criminal Sexual Assault and one count of Attempt Criminal Sexual Assault after a bench trial before the Honorable Judge Debra Schafer.

On July 23rd, 2023, Winnebago County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to a Rockford Hospital after a report of a sexual assault. At the time, a female victim told hospital staff what had occurred at a residence in the 1200 block of Park Terrace. During a recorded interview with Detectives, the victim said the defendant, William Acton, sexually assaulted her at a birthday party. Witnesses described the victim as being very intoxicated to the point that she threw up, had to lay down in another room, and that they attempted to feed her bread and water, and eventually brought her upstairs to sleep. During trial, the victim recalled how she was sleeping on a bed in the bedroom, and woke up to the defendant on top of her sexually assaulting her. The victim described feeling frozen in fear and still feeling intoxicated during the assault, and still having trouble speaking and walking. The Illinois State Police Forensic Laboratory processed the sexual assault kit and found Acton's DNA. The Crime Lab found alcohol to still be present in the victim's urine, which was collected the afternoon following the assault.

Criminal Sexual Assault is a Class 1 Felony that is punishable by an extended sentence of 4-30 years in the Illinois Department of Correction followed by three years to natural life of mandatory supervised release and lifetime registration as a sex offender. The sentence must be served at a rate of 85%. Each charge of Criminal Sexual Assault must be served consecutively.

Attempt Criminal Sexual Assault is a Class 2 Felony that is punishable by a sentence of 3-14 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by a year of mandatory supervised release and lifetime registration as a sex offender.

Acton is scheduled to be back in court on August 26, 2026, before Judge Schafer in Courtroom 317 of the Winnebago County Courthouse.



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The Winnebago County Sheriff's Department conducted the investigation in this case. Assistant State's Attorneys Emily Palmer and Nathaniel Huss are handling the prosecution.

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