

Instagram Deception Ends in Horror for Charlotte Teen

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— Categories: Crime



CHARLOTTE, N.C. – A Charlotte man accused of grooming, raping, and threatening a 15-year-old girl he met through Instagram is now in custody on a \$2 million bond.

Police say 30-year-old Terrell West used a fake identity to manipulate the teenager over months of secret communication that ended in repeated sexual assaults and a pregnancy. According to court records, West told the victim he was 22 and began contacting her through Instagram last September.

Investigators report that what started as casual messaging quickly escalated into flattery, requests for nude photos, and eventually, threats. The victim shared during a forensic interview that West recorded the assaults and warned he would post explicit images online if she spoke to anyone.

“This is an alarming but sadly common example of how predators are exploiting social media,” said Andrew Oliver, CEO of Pat’s Place Child Advocacy Center, where the victim received support. “Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat are increasingly the places offenders look for children to target.”

The abuse continued for several months before the situation came to light in late June, when the girl arrived at Atrium Main Hospital after her water broke prematurely. Medical staff immediately contacted authorities, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department opened an investigation.

Oliver explained that many online grooming cases follow a similar pattern: a friendly message, a quick shift into more personal conversations, and pressure to keep the relationship secret. “That initial hello can spiral into something incredibly dangerous,” Oliver warned.

West has a criminal record dating back over a decade, including multiple assault charges. Authorities believe he used his experience to manipulate the teen and avoid detection.

Child advocates are urging parents to stay alert for signs that their child may be in contact with an online predator.

“If your child is receiving gifts, money, or attention from someone they’ve never met in person, or if they become secretive about an online relationship, those are major red flags,” Oliver said.

West remains in Mecklenburg County Jail as prosecutors consider additional charges.

Anyone concerned about a child’s online activity is encouraged to contact local law enforcement or organizations like Pat’s Place Child Advocacy Center.