

Beach Park woman gets prison for sex with girl

Met 13-year-old at Boys and Girls Club

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BY KENDRICK MARSHALL kmarshall@snc1.com

Giana Burkley was warned repeatedly to keep her distance from a 13-year-old grade school girl.

The 20-year-old woman's relationship to the girl was inappropriate, the girl's mother told her.

Even arresting the Beach Park woman was not enough to keep her away from the girl she met through the Boys and Girl Club of Lake County in Waukegan.

On Friday, Judge Theodore Potkonjak made sure Burkley would be unable to speak with or send messages to the adolescent, sentencing Burkley to 6½ years in prison for aggravated criminal sexual assault.

"A piece of (the victim's) childhood was taken that can never be replaced," Potkonjak said. "She is a victim plain and simple. She is still suffering every day...day in and day out."

Burkley was arrested last spring after it was discovered she was having a sexual relationship with the girl.

According to court documents, Burkley performed sex acts on the girl on several occasions from August 2008 to February 2009.

Assistant State's Attorney Tim Niehus said he did not believe Burkley understood the ramifications of her actions, and that only a lengthy prison sentence would be proper punishment.

"There was a lack of responsibility and accountability," said Niehus, who emphasized how deplorable it was for a woman to engage in sexual activity with such a young girl.

Defense attorney Cynthia Pruim Haran said her client has expressed remorse for her crime and should have been placed on probation. She said prison would not be beneficial to Burkley or her family in the long run.

"It's my fault," Burkley said to the court, "and I hope that the family will find it in their hearts to forgive me."