

# Plainfield Man Sentenced for String of Sexual Assaults on Girl

A Plainfield man was sentenced to 11 years in state prison Friday morning for engaging in an approximately 14-month sexual relationship with a teenage girl, acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park announced.

Thomas McDaniel, 55, pleaded guilty in April to first-degree aggravated sexual assault.

The victim was 15 when McDaniel, who was known and trusted by the girl's family, started initiating the sexual activity in November 2010, with the first incident coinciding with an offer to help the teenager learn to drive, according to the investigation. Subsequent incidents repeatedly occurred in cars and at businesses and residences in Plainfield, Edison, and Newark until the victim ultimately told friends about the sexual assaults in March 2012, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor Patricia L.F.Cronin, who represented the state in the case.

The victim's friends urged the girl to tell her mother, who subsequently confronted McDaniel, and a complaint was filed by the Plainfield Police Division, Cronin said. The mother also delivered a victim's statement in open court Friday, when McDaniel declined to speak before being sentenced by state Superior Court Judge Stuart L. Peim.

"This was one of the most egregious violations of trust and innocence I've ever encountered," Cronin said. "I think the court correctly imposed the term reached through the plea agreement."

Under the terms of the No Early Release Act, McDaniel must

serve at least 85 percent of his sentence before becoming eligible for parole, and thereafter he will be subjected to five years of parole supervision.