



**Rick Staly, Sheriff**  
**FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FCSO Arrests Man for Lewd or Lascivious Battery on a Child**

BUNNELL, Fla. — The Flagler County Sheriff's Office has arrested an 18-year-old man for lewd and lascivious battery after detectives determined he engaged in sexual intercourse multiple times with an underage victim.

The investigation began on May 9, after a school guidance counselor informed an FCSO school resource deputy of a sex offense that had been reported to them. The guidance counselor advised the SRD that a 13-year-old had reported to them they had engaged in sexual intercourse with Josiah Morales, 18, of Palm Coast. The SRD gathered further information from the victim and contacted the FCSO Major Case Unit to investigate.

Major case detectives and a child protective investigator with the Florida Department of Children and Families responded to investigate. During the interview, the victim told detectives they had first met Morales a few weeks earlier through a mutual friend at the friend's residence.

The victim stated that Morales expressed his interest to his friend, who informed him the victim was only 13 years old and would not do anything sexually with him. Despite having knowledge of the victim's age, Morales obtained the victim's phone number from his friend's cellphone and began to communicate with the victim. In the days following their first meeting, Morales invited the victim back to his friend's residence, where he convinced them to have sex with him multiple times. On at least one occasion, the victim felt coerced to have sex with Morales.

After speaking with the victim, detectives interviewed Morales at his residence. Morales told detectives they had sex but stated that he believed the victim to be 15 years old at the time — notably,

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still under the legal age of consent in Florida.

On August 13, detectives obtained an arrest warrant for Morales for lewd or lascivious battery of a victim 12 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age. That same day, detectives and deputies located and arrested Morales at his residence.



*Left, Josiah Morales is arrested by deputies in Palm Coast on August 13, 2025.  
Right, Josiah Morales (Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility mugshot)*

“I commend this victim for speaking up and reporting this incident to their guidance counselor,” said Sheriff Rick Staly. “This man took advantage of a young victim. I commend our detectives in the Major Case Unit and our partners at both the DCF and the State Attorney’s Office for their collaborative work on this case so that we could arrest him and take him to the Green Roof Inn before he had more opportunities to take the innocence away from more young victims.”

Morales was transported to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility, where he is being held on a \$30,000 bond.

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