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DOTHAN EAGLE

Ex-counselor pleads guilty to harassing client

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OZARK — A former counselor who had specialized in trauma treatment for sexually abused children in Dale County pleaded guilty on Friday to harassing a 16-year-old client by way of kissing and unwanted touching, according to authorities.

Virgil Allen Freet, 51, of Apache Drive in Ozark, pleaded guilty to the misdemeanor charge on Friday.

His attorney, Tom Smith, was not expected back into his office for comment late Friday.

Freet was charged with two counts of sexual abuse on May 23, 2008, after authorities said video surveillance caught him improperly touching a client during a counseling session.

Freet was president, licensed counselor and shareholder of Independent Counseling & Assessment Services in Enterprise, which was in Dale County's limits.

The business' website said Freet's primary concentration was "special interest in" physical and sexual abuse.

The Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling suspended Freet's license as a result of the charges.

Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams said his office was not "overly thrilled" with the outcome, but that certain elements of a felony sex abuse charge did not exist because of the client's age.

"People that provide services like he did are supposed to be people that can be trusted, but he violated that trust and he's been held accountable for that violation. Everybody's proud of the young lady for standing up to him, and because of her bravery and with the help of the licensing

See PLEADS, 3A

Pleads

continued from 1A

board, he'll never be able to violate anyone else's trust in a practice," Adams said.

According to civil attorney Bo Boyd, Freet is also facing a malpractice lawsuit in relation to the incident.

Boyd said the case involves some of the "worst" breach of trust he has seen.