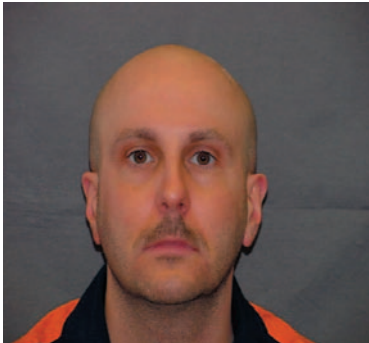


Faces behind the Figures

Are we safer because they're behind bars?



Christopher Murzin, No. 246250

Crime: Criminal Sexual Conduct, 3rd Degree

Sentence: 6 months – 15 years

First Possible Parole: March 27, 1996

Paroled: March 23, 2000

Parole Revoked: Dec. 5, 2001

After completing 21 months of a 24-month parole, Christopher Murzin was returned to prison for having a pornographic magazine in his possession. In August 2006, the board continued his incarceration for a sixth year for this technical violation of a parole condition.

Christopher Murzin was diagnosed as developmentally disabled in kindergarten and spent his school years in programs for special students until he dropped out in 10th grade. He had trouble keeping a job because employers said he worked too slowly; he received disability payments from Social Security. At age 24, he still lived at home with his parents. He had no criminal record, adult or juvenile, and no substance abuse or mental health problems.

In February 1995, at the home of a mutual acquaintance, Murzin had sex with a woman he had known from school. She was 26, but had the mental capacity of a 6 - 9 year old. The victim said she told Murzin “no,” but that he led her to a bedroom and had intercourse with her anyway.

Following a bench trial, Murzin was found guilty of third-degree criminal sexual conduct. Based on a recommendation by the Recorder’s Court Psychiatric Clinic, the judge initially sentenced Murzin to five years probation so that he could participate in a program set up by the Wayne County Association for the Retarded. The judge stated his belief that “the program the Clinic has outlined...given this defendant’s mental capacity...is superior to incarcerating him at this time.” However, one month later Murzin was re-sentenced because the CSC statute mandates a prison term. The judge imposed a term of 6 months to 15 years – below the sentencing guidelines which called for a minimum term between one and four years.

In prison, Murzin completed several programs, including 46 weeks of Sex Offender Therapy. Although the therapist reported that Murzin made only marginal progress in treatment, at least partially due to his mental impairments, he concluded that Murzin would likely be at minimal risk of re-offending if given appropriate community supervision and follow-up therapy.

After Murzin had served 4½ years, the parole board finally placed him on parole for 24 months in March 2000. Murzin reported to his agent as required and participated in group therapy. He ultimately had his own apartment and did odd jobs for his landlord. Although Murzin had some difficulties meeting all the conditions of his supervision and, at one point, was placed on tether, there were never any allegations of sexual misconduct.

In December 2001, after 21 months on parole, Murzin was charged with violating several parole



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More about the men and women who fill Michigan's prisons

conditions when a police officer saw him in front of his home talking with another parolee who had stopped by to get insurance information regarding a traffic accident. The woman had a 13-year-old girl with her. When the officer entered Murzin's home, he found a pornographic magazine.

At his violation hearing in February, Murzin was found guilty only of "possessing sexually stimulating material" – the magazine. The hearing officer recommended re-parole in April, but the parole board decided the violation showed "inappropriate judgement, which in combination with the background of the offender supports return to prison."

The board reviewed Murzin again in 2002, and in 2003, 2004, 2005. Each time, it continued his incarceration for an additional year, citing his crime and his "parole failure."

In 2006, the board continued Murzin for yet another year, using this 'substantial and compelling reason':

P[risoner]'s minimization of his conduct while on parole is indicative of a lack of insight and a lack of determination to lead a crime-free life and not re-offend. P is still considered a risk to the general public safety.

By his next re-consideration date in December 2007, Murzin will have served six years for the parole violation of possessing a pornographic magazine. Altogether, on an initial minimum sentence of six months, he will have served 10½ years.

