

VOLUSIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

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FORMER NEW SMYRNA BEACH MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER CHARGED IN SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH 8TH GRADER

A former New Smyrna Beach Middle School teacher was arrested today on charges that she had a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old student and sent him nude photos. Volusia County sheriff's detectives arrested 26-year-old Stephanie Peterson (DOB 5/11/1991) (also known as Stephanie Ferri) this morning on two counts of lewd or lascivious battery and one count of transmission of harmful materials to a minor. The relationship is believed to have started in November. A detective responded to the victim's family's home Tuesday after the student disclosed the relationship to his parents. The student, an 8th grader, told detectives Peterson would send him nude photos. He said she started coming to his home at night, picking him up around 11 p.m. on several occasions and bringing him back around 1 or 2 a.m. The victim reported that Peterson told him they couldn't tell anyone about their relationship or they'd get in trouble. He also said she bought him marijuana and bowls for smoking it, and his grades suffered after their relationship started. Peterson was taken into custody and was being interviewed this morning before transport to the Volusia County Branch Jail, where her charges carry \$25,000 bond. She resigned her teaching position on Monday, according to the School District. Detectives are asking parents to talk to their kids, and anyone with information about any additional potential victims is asked to contact the VCSO Child Exploitation Unit at 386-323-3574.

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