



ASHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff B. Phil Howell

For Immediate Release
March 11th, 2026

Austin Tyler Durden Charged with two counts of Second-Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor

Lansing, N.C. – Sheriff B. Phil Howell announces the arrest of 21-year-old Austin Tyler Durden of Lansing, NC, for 2 counts of Second-Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor.

The Ashe County Sheriff's Office and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations (SBI) Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (IACA) launched a joint investigation into illegal internet-based activity concerning child sexual exploitation.

On October 9th, 2025, Detective Curtis Elliott received information regarding internet activity in Lansing, NC, involving child sexual exploitation. On November 19th, 2025, a search warrant was issued for the account used, which came back to Austin Durden. On March 5th, 2026, Detective Elliott obtained search warrants for Durden. These warrants ultimately led to Durden's arrest and seizure of electronic devices. This investigation is ongoing, and additional charges may be pending.

Austin Tyler Durden of Lansing was arrested and is being held at the Ashe County Detention Center under a No Bond. **In North Carolina, a no-bond means a judge has ordered that the arrested individual must remain in custody until the case is resolved or a new bond hearing is held.** His charges include:

- 2 Felony Counts of Second-Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor



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