

Woman OKs 25-year term in teen sex, drug case

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Facing as many as 70 years in prison, a Santa Cruz woman accused of furnishing dangerous drugs to a teen-age girl and putting her to work as a prostitute has agreed to a sentence of 25 years.

Denise Dalton, 32, pleaded guilty Monday to seven charges resulting from her allegedly prostituting a 13-year-old Live Oak girl who had been kicked out of her home last January. She agreed to a sentence of 25 years as part of a plea bargain. She will be sentenced in a few weeks.

Trial set this week

Dalton, who frequented the lower Ocean Street neighborhood — a hangout for Santa Cruz drug dealers and streetwalkers — would have faced 40 charges had she gone to trial as scheduled this week.

She pleaded guilty to three counts of providing cocaine and heroin to the teen-ager as well as a 17-year-old girl, three counts of aiding in child molestation and one count of pandering.

Dalton was arrested in February after an acquaintance of the 13-year-old told authorities she feared for her safety. The girl had apparently contacted him to report her whereabouts.

13-year-old's story

After Dalton's arrest, police said the youngster told them a sordid tale of intravenous drug use and prostitution under the woman's tutelage. Officers said the girl ended up with Dalton at an Ocean Street motel after having been booted out of her home.

The girl said Dalton told her she would have to start having sex with men if she wished to keep living in the woman's motel room, police said. She said that shortly after her first act of prostitution, Dalton injected her with a mixture of cocaine and heroin, according to officers.

The teen-ager told police that during the three weeks she was with Dalton, she had sex with as many as 15 men a day and used drugs frequently.

Now 14, she reportedly lives with relatives.