

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, SEVENTH APPELLATE DISTRICT

State v. Lewis

2026-Ohio-1326 · No. 25 MA 0093 · Decided April 13, 2026

SUMMARY

The Ohio Seventh District Court of Appeals affirmed Matthias Merritt Lewis’s convictions and consecutive five-year prison sentence for five counts of pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor. The court held that the record supported the trial court’s findings under R.C. 2929.14(C)(4), including that the offenses formed part of a course of conduct, and that the trial court could consider the broader societal impact of child pornography under R.C. 2929.11(A).

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Seventh Appellate District
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Cheryl L. Waite, P.J.; Carol Ann Robb, J.; Mark A. Hanni, J.
JURISDICTION	Ohio Court of Appeals, Seventh Appellate District, Mahoning County
DECIDED	April 13, 2026
DOCKET	25 MA 0093
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant appealed his felony sentence, challenging the imposition of consecutive prison terms and the trial court's consideration of the broader societal impact of child pornography in sentencing.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under R.C. 2953.08(G)(2), the appellate court reviews the record and may modify or vacate a felony sentence if it clearly and convincingly finds that the record does not support the applicable statutory findings or that the sentence is otherwise contrary to law. Felony sentences are not reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Ohio Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Matthias Merritt Lewis v. State of Ohio

TOPICS

- sentencing
- standard of review
- statutory interpretation
- appellate procedure
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the record supported the trial court's findings required by R.C. 2929.14(C)(4) for consecutive sentences.
2. Whether the offenses were committed as part of a course of conduct sufficient to support consecutive sentences under R.C. 2929.14(C)(4)(b).
3. Whether the felony sentence was contrary to law because the trial court failed to consider individualized factors under R.C. 2929.11 and R.C. 2929.12 and considered the broader societal impact of child pornography.

HOLDINGS

1. The consecutive sentences were lawful because the trial court made the required findings, incorporated them into the sentencing entry, and the record supported those findings.
2. The record supported the finding that Lewis's offenses were part of a course of conduct.
3. The trial court did not err by considering the broader societal problem of child pornography and the deterrent effect on others when imposing the sentence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The sentencing court is not required “to give a talismanic incantation of the words of the statute.”” (§ 12)

“By specifically noting that one of the purposes in sentencing is to protect the public from “others,” it implicitly allows a trial court to consider the deterrent effect as a whole when imposing a sentence.” (§ 21)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A task force investigation revealed that Lewis had uploaded and downloaded child-pornography images using several electronic devices and social-media platforms. A search warrant led to the discovery of child pornography on at least two devices, and Lewis admitted that he had viewed and traded the material for at least two years. The trial court considered the graphic nature of the material, Lewis's remorse and rehabilitation efforts, and the need to punish him and protect the public before imposing consecutive sentences.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Lewis pleaded guilty in the Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas to five fourth-degree felony counts of pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor or impaired person. The trial court imposed one year on each count, to be served consecutively, for an aggregate five-year sentence. Lewis timely appealed only his sentence, and the Seventh District affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Bonnell, 2014-Ohio-3177, ¶¶ 36-37
- State v. Jones, 2024-Ohio-1083, ¶ 11
- State v. Nelder, 2025-Ohio-2906 (7th Dist.)

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