

Calif. mom finds missing children using Facebook

June 6 2010

(AP) -- A Southern California mother whose two children were reported missing 15 years ago has tracked them down in Florida using Facebook.

The children's father, Faustino Utrera, took off with them in 1995 when they were ages 2 and 3, said San Bernardino Deputy District Attorney Kurt Rowley. The mother had found her daughter's Facebook profile after searching for her name on the social networking site in March, Rowley said.

An official said Saturday that the now 17-year-old girl and 16-year-old boy have been placed in the custody of the state of Florida.

"You can imagine the feelings she's having, not seeing her children for so many years and knowing they've bonded with another family," Rowley said about the mother. "But at the same time they're almost within her grasp."

The two teenagers are being cared for by a non-relative in Florida with whom the pair have an existing relationship, said Florida Department of Children and Families spokeswoman Elizabeth Arenas, who did not identify the mother.

She referred further questions to the woman's lawyer, who did not return a phone call.

Osceola County Sheriff's deputies detained Utrera on an arrest warrant

last month obtained by San Bernardino County prosecutors who were contacted by the missing children's mother, Rowley told the San Bernardino Sun.

He was charged with kidnapping and violating child custody orders.

Rowley said that when the daughter's profile was found on [Facebook](#), she initially told her mother that she did not want to re-establish their relationship, but the contact helped prosecutors file two felony counts each of kidnapping and child abduction against Utrera.

Rowley said he expected Utrera to fight extradition at a July 17 hearing in Florida.

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