FILED
JAN 23 1995
CLERK SUPREME COURT

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA

No. 4-616 / 94-1320

IN THE INTEREST OF K.L.M. a/k/a, K.L.C., Minor Child,

D.C., Mother,

Appellant,

D.J.M., Father,

Appellant.

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Mahaska County, Michael R. Stewart, District Associate Judge.

Mother and father appeal the district court's order terminating their parental rights. **AFFIRMED.**

Randy S. Degeest, Oskaloosa, for appellant-mother.

Scott Campbell, Oskaloosa, for appellant-father.

Thomas J. Miller, Attorney General, Gordon E. Allen, Deputy Attorney General, Charles K. Phillips, Assistant Attorney General, and Vicki Siegel, Assistant County Attorney, for appellee-State.

Jeffrey A. Smith, Oskaloosa, guardian ad litem, for minor child.

Considered by Hayden, P.J., and Sackett and Huitink, JJ.

HUITINK, J.

Deanna and Danny appeal a juvenile court order terminating their parental rights to their daughter, Kristin, born December 17, 1992. We affirm.

Prior to Kristin's birth Deanna resided at Diamond Shelter, a community-supported apartment living program. Deanna identified several possible fathers of Kristin; however, Danny attended parenting and Lamaze classes at the Diamond Shelter with Deanna, and Kristin was given Danny's last name. No blood testing was undertaken to determine paternity.

Kristin was born approximately six weeks prematurely and suffers from numerous health problems including laryngomalacia, a condition which interferes with her feeding. Due to hospital workers' concerns that Deanna could not properly care for Kristin, she was placed in foster care upon her release from the hospital.

In January 1993 Kristin was adjudicated CINA pursuant to Iowa Code section 232.2(6)(c)(2) (1991). The court continued Kristin's custody with the department of human services for purposes of placement in foster care. Deanna was ordered to complete a child nurturing class provided by the County Public Health Nurses. The Homemaker Health Aide Services and First Resources were ordered to provide Deanna with parenting skills instruction and supervise her visitations with Kristin.

At the March 1993 dispositional hearing Danny declined to admit paternity. The court then found Danny was not an interested party and excused him from the proceedings. The court ordered Kristin remain in the department's custody.

In September 1993 the State filed a petition for termination of Deanna's and Kristin's unknown father's parental rights pursuant to Iowa Code sections 232.116(1)(d), (g), and (b) (1993). At the termination hearing Danny acknowledged paternity and expressed his desire to have custody of Kristin.

Danny stated he was not offered or provided any services through DHS. Danny explained he was currently in a Job Corps program in Utah. He believed he could care for Kristin once he completed his program, found housing, and secured employment. Deanna stated she currently lives at Country Life Health Care. She could not think of any other services the department could provide to help her care for Kristin; however, Deanna did not want her parental rights terminated.

Several caseworkers testified they did not believe Deanna would ever be able to care for Kristin. They explained Kristin's special needs which require her caretaker to know CPR (Deanna does not), be patient in feeding her (a process that takes about an hour), be able to perform some physical therapy throughout the day, and have good hygiene. Each of the caseworkers recommended the termination of parental rights was in Kristin's best interests.

The court found neither Deanna nor Danny could provide adequate care for Kristin and terminated their parental rights pursuant to sections 232.116(1)(d), (g) and (b).

Appellate review of termination proceedings is de novo. In re W.G., 349 N.W.2d 487, 491 (Iowa 1984) cert. denied sub nom. J.G. v. Tauke, 469 U.S. 1222 (1985). We give weight to the findings of fact of the juvenile court, especially when considering the credibility of witnesses, but we are not bound by those determinations. Id. at 491-92.

Our primary concern in termination proceedings is the best interest of the child. Iowa R. App. P. 14(f)(5); In re Dameron, 306 N.W.2d 743, 745 (Iowa 1981). In deciding what is best for the child we look to the child's long-range as well as immediate interests. We also look to the past performance of the parents because it is an indication of the quality of care the parent is capable of providing in the future. In re A.M.S., 419 N.W.2d 723, 726 (Iowa 1988).

Deanna contends the State did not make reasonable efforts to reunite her with Kristin. She argues the State determined early on to recommend termination and then "went through the motions" of providing services. We disagree.

Since Kristin's birth Deanna has been provided with support services in the areas of parenting education, personal hygiene, grooming, daily living skills and interpersonal relationships. Despite the numerous services

provided to her, Deanna has been unable to grasp even the basic requirements necessary to care for Kristin's special needs.

Because of her numerous health problems, Kristin is highly susceptible to infections. Deanna has been instructed as to the importance of proper personal hygiene, yet she has contracted scabies several times and has refused to seek medical attention to treat the problem. This resulted in Kristin contracting scabies as well.

Kristin requires twenty-four-hour monitoring. The record shows Deanna is unable to provide the care Kristin needs. We conclude Kristin's best interests require termination of Deanna's parental rights.

Danny contends the State failed to offer him any services and did not make reasonable efforts to reunite him with Kristin. He also claims the court erred in finding he abandoned Kristin, failed to maintain significant and meaningful contact with her, and could not assume custody of her at the present time. We strongly disagree.

Parenting cannot be turned on and off like a spigot. It must be constant, responsible, and reliable. In re L.L., 459 N.W.2d 489, 498 (Iowa 1990). Parenting is not a matter of convenience. See In re Marriage of Green, 417 N.W.2d 252, 253 (Iowa App. 1987). A child should not have to endlessly suffer the parentless limbo of foster care. In re D.J.R., 454 N.W.2d 838, 845 (Iowa 1990). In addition, the crucial days of childhood cannot be suspended

while parents experiment with ways to face up to their own problems. In re A.C., 415 N.W.2d 609, 613 (Iowa 1987).

The record shows Danny has changed his mind several times as to whether he is Kristin's father. But for attending Lamaze classes and visiting Kristin once, he has no involvement with her. At the time of the dispositional hearing services could have been offered to him; however, he declined to admit paternity and was no longer an interested party. At the present time Danny resides in Utah and offers few assurances as to his future plans.

Our de novo review reveals there is clear and convincing evidence showing Kristin cannot be returned to the care of either parent. The statutory grounds for termination have been met. It is in Kristin's immediate and long-term best interests to terminate both Deanna's and Danny's parental rights. The foster parents have indicated a desire to adopt Kristen. The decision of the juvenile court is affirmed.

AFFIRMED.