IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA

FILED
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CLERK SUPREME COURT

No. 2-324 / 91-1540

IN THE INTEREST OF A.S., C.S. AND B.B., Children.

S.J.S. n/k/a S.B., Mother,

Appellant.

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Warren County, Carol S. Egly, District Associate Judge.

Mother appeals a juvenile court decision terminating her parental rights. **AFFIRMED.**

Louis M. Fusco of Wilson, Fowler & Fusco, Indianola, for appellant.

Bonnie J. Campbell, Attorney General, John M. Parmeter, Special Assistant Attorney General, and Judy Sheirbon, Assistant Attorney General, for appellee State.

Robert Stuyvesant of Stuyvesant & Benton, Carlisle, guardian ad litem for the children.

Considered by Oxberger, C.J., and Schlegel and Sackett, JJ.

SACKETT, J.

A young mother seeks reversal of a trial court's order terminating her parental rights to her three daughters. She contends if she is given additional time she can correct her parenting difficulties and she will be able to parent her daughters. We affirm.

The mother, Susan J. Smith,[1] was born in February 1969. Susan's oldest daughter, Betty,[2] was born in December 1986. Betty's father is Susan's stepfather, whose sexual abuse of Susan resulted in the pregnancy. Susan's second and third children are Ann,[3] born in November 1988, and Carol,[4] born in December 1989. Ann is the child of Susan's husband. Susan and her husband are separated. They have not dissolved their marriage but intend to do so. Carol is the child of a third father. The three fathers' rights to the three children were also terminated. The fathers do not appeal.

Susan had a difficult childhood, and since Betty was born she has lived at the poverty level. Susan has had serious problems with substance abuse. She also has serious emotional problems, and she has difficulty accepting

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1. S.J.S. are the mother's initials. Susan J. Smith is not her actual name.

2. Betty is not her real name.

3. Her initials are A.S. Ann is not her real name.

4. Her initial is C. Carol is not her real name.

responsibility for her family. Susan has been involved with services for her children since their births.

In April 1990, the three children were removed from Susan's care and not returned. The removal was triggered when Susan, who was intoxicated, went to a local convenience store and threatened suicide. Police officers went to Susan's home where the three children were. The police officers were not able to arouse the children's caretakers.

Since the children have been removed, a number of services have been offered to Susan and the children's fathers. Susan has been offered counseling and substance abuse treatment. We find the State, in offering the services, has made reasonable efforts to help Susan correct her parenting problems and allow the family to be reunited.

Susan presented evidence at trial that the programs offered her may not have been structured to most effectively meet her needs. Susan has met with little success in the offered programs. While we agree with Susan that in retrospect different programs might have better served her needs, we also recognize some of her problems were occasioned by her failure to effectively utilize services offered, and her refusal to follow program requirements.

Susan advances that she was not able at the time of the termination hearing to assume care and responsibility for her three daughters. Susan's position is that she is finally in a program that will actually help her, and she

should have more time to correct her parenting deficiencies. At the trial on the termination petition, the children had been out of Susan's home for more than one year, and had been found to be children in need of assistance more than one year earlier.

The State argues time is of the essence, that Susan has had the time allocated by statute, and she should not have additional time. It cites cases of the Iowa Supreme Court that direct children should not be forced to wait for the maturity of their parents, and children cannot wait responsible parenting. See In re R.J., 436 N.W.2d 630, 636 (Iowa 1989); In re A.C., 415 N.W.2d 609, 614 (Iowa 1987).

The State advances while Susan's reason for seeking reversal of the termination order is that she is now willing to address her psychological problems through in-patient treatment, that argument does not justify reversal.

We review de novo. See T.D.C., 336 N.W.2d 738, 740 (Iowa 1983). We have carefully reviewed the evidence of Susan's problems, her difficulties in accepting services, the very limited progress she had made by the time of the termination hearing, and the cases she cites in support of her position. We recognize the inavailability of adoptive homes and the problems children frequently face when their biological ties are severed. We cannot say these children might not have been better off if their mother was allowed additional time to correct her problems and she was offered

additional assistance with her parenting. But the fact is, Susan was unable to correct her problems within the time provided by the statutory framework. We have no choice but to affirm.

AFFIRMED.