

**STATE OF MICHIGAN**  
**COURT OF APPEALS**

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In the Matter of EMMA LETHBRIDGE, Minor.

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,

Petitioner-Appellee,

v

MATTHEW LETHBRIDGE,

Respondent-Appellant,

and

JENNIFER COPELAND LETHBRIDGE,

Respondent.

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In the Matter of EMMA LETHBRIDGE, Minor.

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,

Petitioner-Appellee,

v

JENNIFER COPELAND LETHBRIDGE,

Respondent-Appellant,

and

MATTHEW LETHBRIDGE,

Respondent.

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UNPUBLISHED

November 13, 2008

No. 284389

Washtenaw Circuit Court

Family Division

LC No. 06-000149-NA

No. 284390

Washtenaw Circuit Court

Family Division

LC No. 06-000149-NA

Before: Fitzgerald, P.J., and Bandstra and Schuette, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

In these consolidated appeals, respondents appeal as of right the trial court order terminating their parental rights to the minor child under MCL 712A.19b(3)(i) and (l). We affirm.

Respondents do not contest the establishment of statutory grounds for termination. Rather, they argue that termination of their parental rights was clearly contrary to Emma's best interests because of the bond they shared with Emma and their ability to properly care for Emma. We disagree. The trial court did not clearly err in finding termination not clearly contrary to Emma's best interests. MCL 712A.19b(5); MCR 3.977(J); *In re Trejo*, 462 Mich 341, 353; 612 NW2d 407 (2000).

Respondents have had their parental rights to nine other children terminated. While respondents say they now accept responsibility, and that the deplorable home conditions and medical neglect leading to the terminations in 2001 would not recur, the filthy, unsanitary conditions were again present when Emma was removed in 2005. Further, Dr. James Henry and Dr. Joshua Ehrlich, two psychologists independently evaluating respondent mother, concluded that she did not take responsibility for the other children's neglect and would be very unlikely to change and be able to provide a proper home for Emma. Respondent father argued for custody on his own, but he had not separated from respondent mother, and his counsel's questions and argument repeatedly referred to the court allowing respondent mother to continue living in the home. Respondent mother suffered from serious mental health problems that repeatedly caused her to become depressed and neglect the children. Respondent father had left the home on several occasions, and his work history was spotty. He had failed in the past to deliver on promises to assist respondent mother with keeping the home clean.<sup>1</sup> Respondents even missed their last visit with Emma.

The evidence showed that respondents' bond with Emma was not strong and was marked by insecure attachment. During Emma's first three years, respondents did not provide a stable home but moved repeatedly to evade social service agencies. Emma's therapist and other experts stressed her need for consistency and stability. When the trial court's plan for permanent guardianship with the foster parents did not work out, the change of goal to termination was the only viable alternative. The trial court did not err in terminating respondent's parental rights.

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<sup>1</sup> See *In the Matter of Xavier Lethbridge, Minor*, unpublished opinion per curiam of the Court of Appeals, issued August 19, 2008 (Docket Nos. 283016/283017); *In the Matter of Lilith Lethbridge, Minor*, unpublished opinion per curiam of the Court of Appeals, issued January 24, 2008 (Docket Nos. 278037/278038).

Affirmed.

/s/ E. Thomas Fitzgerald

/s/ Richard A. Bandstra

/s/ Bill Schuette