STATE OF MICHIGAN

COURT OF APPEALS

UNPUBLISHED
January 17, 2019

In re G. J. MORRIS, Minor.

No. 344263
Wayne Circuit Court
Family Division
LC No. 17-000119-NA

Before: LETICA, P.J., and CAVANAGH and METER, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

Respondent-father appeals as of right the trial court's order terminating his parental rights to his son, GJM, under MCL 712A.19b(3)(c)(*i*) (conditions that led to adjudication continue to exist), (g) (failure to provide proper care or custody),[1] and (j) (reasonable likelihood the child will be harmed if returned to the parent).[2] We affirm.

I. REASONABLE EFFORTS

On appeal, respondent-father does not address directly the statutory grounds supporting the termination of his parental rights. Rather, respondent-father argues that the trial court's termination of his parental rights was premature because petitioner failed to make reasonable efforts to reunify respondent-father and GJM. See *In re Mason*, 486 Mich 142, 152; 782 NW2d 747 (2010). Absent exceptions not present here, petitioner is required to make reasonable efforts to rectify the conditions that led to the initial removal and to reunite families. *In re Terry*, 240 Mich App 14, 25-26; 610 NW2d 563 (2000). Petitioner's responsibility to work toward

[1] MCL 712A.19b(3)(g) has been amended, effective June 12, 2018, to require the trial court to inquire into the parent's financial ability to provide proper care or custody. See 2018 PA 58. Because the trial court's order was entered before the effective date of amendment, the new version of MCL 712A.19b(3)(g) is inapplicable to this case.

[2] The trial court also terminated respondent-mother's parental rights, but she is not a party to this appeal.

reunification, however, is not unilateral; parents have "a commensurate responsibility . . . to participate in the services that are offered." *In re Frey*, 297 Mich App 242, 248; 824 NW2d 569 (2012).

Here, the trial court accurately concluded that respondent-father had done "nothing" to work toward reunification with GJM. Petitioner twice referred respondent-father for services, but respondent-father did not follow through with either referral. Respondent-father's caseworker attempted to contact respondent-father several times, but respondent-father refused to maintain contact with her. Respondent-father failed to provide verification of his housing and employment and, if respondent-father had engaged in services on his own, he failed to provide any verification of those services to petitioner. Indeed, the only action respondent-father took on this case was to attend weekly parenting time.

Respondent-father argues that petitioner should have placed GJM with a relative or sought a guardianship to give respondent-father more time to complete his treatment plan. The child, however, *was* placed with relatives—his maternal grandparents—and, even if petitioner had sought a guardianship, it is clear that any extra time would not have benefitted respondent-father or GJM. It is simply illogical to conclude that petitioner should have given respondent-father more time to complete a treatment plan that he twice refused to start. Thus, the record shows that it was *respondent*, not petitioner, who failed to make reasonable efforts at reunification. Respondent-father's argument is without merit.

II. BEST INTERESTS

Respondent-father also argues that termination of his parental rights was not in GJM's best interests. We review for clear error the trial court's decision regarding the child's best interests. *In re Trejo*, 462 Mich 341, 356-357; 612 NW2d 407 (2000); see also MCR 3.977(K). "A finding of fact is clearly erroneous if the reviewing court has a definite and firm conviction that a mistake has been committed, giving due regard to the trial court's special opportunity to observe the witnesses." *In re BZ*, 264 Mich App 286, 296-297; 690 NW2d 505 (2004).

Respondent-father first argues that termination was not in GJM's best interests because respondent-father "wanted to plan for his child." The record belies this assertion. Respondent-father was referred for services twice and made no effort to reunite with his child.

Respondent-father next argues that the trial court failed to "inquire[] as to the various needs of the child and his placement with maternal grandparents." Respondent-father devotes a mere two sentences of his appellate brief to this argument. "An appellant may not merely announce his position and leave it to this Court to discover and rationalize the basis for his claims, nor may he give only cursory treatment with little or no citation of supporting authority." *People v Payne*, 285 Mich App 181, 195; 774 NW2d 714 (2009) (internal citation and quotation marks omitted). Respondent-father's failure to support his assertion with any record evidence is therefore sufficient for this Court to deny relief.

Moreover, having reviewed the record, we conclude that the trial court properly analyzed the child's best interests. See *In re Olive/Metts Minors*, 297 Mich App 35, 41-42; 823 NW2d 144 (2012). At the time of the trial court's decision, GJM had been a court ward for

approximately 15 months. Respondent-father failed to make any progress toward the completion of his treatment plan and admitted that he did not have appropriate housing for GJM. GJM had been "thriving" in his placement with his maternal grandparents, who were willing to adopt him. Thus, despite the relative placement, the trial court concluded that termination was in GJM's best interests so that GJM could be provided the "stability" that he required at his young age. This conclusion was not clearly erroneous.

Affirmed.

/s/ Anica Letica
/s/ Mark J. Cavanagh
/s/ Patrick M. Meter