

**IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA**

No. 21-0178  
Filed January 12, 2022

**BRANDON VANBUSKIRK,**  
Plaintiff-Appellee,

**vs.**

**ELSIE SEIFERT,**  
Defendant-Appellant.

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Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Cass County, Amy Zacharias, Judge.

Elsie Seifert appeals provisions of a paternity decree. **AFFIRMED.**

Theodore R. Wonio of Rasmussen, Nelson & Wonio, P.L.C., Atlantic, for  
appellant.

Robert J. Engler of Cambridge Law Firm, P.L.C., Atlantic, for appellee.

Considered by Bower, C.J., and Greer and Badding, JJ.

**BOWER, Chief Judge.**

Elsie Seifert and Brandon VanBuskirk are the parents of a child born in August 2018. VanBuskirk was seventeen years old and still in high school when the child was born. Seifert was twenty. VanBuskirk filed a petition to establish paternity, custody, and related matters. Both parents sought physical care of the child. After a trial, the court observed, “To say that both parents have struggled with immaturity is an understatement.” Seifert appeals the decree placing the child in VanBuskirk’s physical care.

This case was tried in equity, and therefore, our review is de novo. Iowa R. App. R. 6.907. Because the district court observes the parties and witnesses, we give weight to its fact and credibility findings, but we are not bound by them. Iowa R. App. P. 6.904(3)(g); see *In re Marriage of Larsen*, 912 N.W.2d 444, 448 (Iowa 2018). Our first and governing consideration is the best interests of the child. Iowa R. App. P. 6.904(3)(o).

The trial court accurately described each parent’s shortcomings and immaturity, assessed the credibility of witnesses, and found it notable that a witness who was once in favor of the child being placed in Seifert’s physical care testified the child was better cared for in VanBuskirk’s home. The court awarded joint legal custody, placed the child in VanBuskirk’s physical care, and ordered liberal visitation. On our de novo review, we agree with the trial court’s findings, and we therefore affirm.

**AFFIRMED.**