

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF IOWA

No. 7-305 / 07-0642
Filed May 9, 2007

**IN THE INTEREST OF N.L.A.,
Minor Child,**

**J.P.C., Father,
Appellant.**

Appeal from the Iowa District Court for Woodbury County, Mary L. Timko,
Associate Juvenile Judge.

A father appeals the termination of his parental rights to his child.

AFFIRMED.

Lori Ubbinga, Sioux City, for appellant father.

Thomas J. Miller, Attorney General, Kathrine S. Miller-Todd, Assistant
Attorney General, Patrick Jennings, County Attorney, and Dewey Sloan,
Assistant County Attorney.

Patrick Tott, Sioux City, for appellee mother.

Marchelle Denker, Sioux City, for the minor child.

Considered by Huitink, P.J., and Zimmer and Vaitheswaran, JJ.

VAITHESWARAN, J.

Joshua is the father of Natasha, born in 2006. Natasha was removed from her parents' care based on concerns that the parents were not properly attending to her medical needs and were allowing their living conditions to deteriorate. The district court eventually terminated Joshua's parental rights to Natasha pursuant to Iowa Code sections 232.116(1)(d) (requiring proof of several elements including proof that parent was "offered or received services to correct the circumstance which led to the adjudication, and the circumstance continues to exist despite the offer or receipt of services"), (e) (requiring proof of several elements including proof that "the parents have not maintained significant and meaningful contact with the child during the previous six months"); and (h) (requiring proof of several elements including proof that "child cannot be returned to the custody of the child's parent") (2005).

On appeal, Joshua contends "the State did not provide reasonable efforts to reunify [him] with his child." Joshua is correct that each of the grounds for termination cited by the district court "implicates the reasonable effort requirement." *In re C.B.*, 611 N.W.2d 489, 492 (Iowa 2000). This requirement is a part of the State's "ultimate proof." *Id.* at 493.

Reviewing the record de novo, we conclude the State satisfied its burden of proving that it made reasonable efforts to reunify Joshua with Natasha. The Iowa Department of Human Services arranged for a psychological and a psychosocial evaluation of Joshua. The department also developed a collaborative treatment plan, imposing on itself an obligation to monitor the parents' care of Natasha and to assist the parents in developing parenting skills.

To implement this plan, the department arranged for supervised visits and parenting sessions.

The parents' deteriorating relationship with each other impeded their progress toward reunification. Approximately two months before the termination hearing, Joshua moved out-of-state. The department attempted to schedule a family team meeting with the parents. Neither parent responded.

Joshua did not appear at the termination hearing or otherwise challenge the "reasonable efforts" evidence presented by the State. A department social worker did appear. She testified to additional reunification efforts made by the department, including paternity testing for Joshua and a home study of Joshua's parents, who lived in Kansas. Although the paternity testing costs were paid by Joshua's parents and the home study was performed by a Kansas agency, both these services, as well as the previously described reunification efforts, were initiated by the department.

We conclude the State made reasonable efforts toward reunification. We affirm the termination of Joshua's parental rights to Natasha.

AFFIRMED.