

SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA

State of Louisiana in the Interest of L.D.

149 So. 3d 763 (La. 2014) · No. 2014-CK-1080; No. 14-KA-1080 · Decided October 15, 2014

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Louisiana held that the juvenile court lacked good cause to delay L.D.'s answer hearing based solely on its scheduling practices under La. Ch. C. art. 854. Nevertheless, the court rejected the argument that the untimely answer hearing automatically rendered the later adjudication untimely or required dismissal of the delinquency petition. Because L.D. did not seek immediate review of the denial of release and the adjudication occurred within the period specified by La. Ch. C. art. 877, the court affirmed the court of appeal and advised the 15th Judicial District Court to reevaluate its practices.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Louisiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam
JURISDICTION	Louisiana
DECIDED	October 15, 2014
DOCKET	2014-CK-1080; No. 14-KA-1080
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	L.D. sought review of a juvenile court ruling and the Louisiana Third Circuit Court of Appeal's affirmance in a delinquency proceeding involving the timeliness of the answer hearing and adjudication hearing. The Louisiana Supreme Court granted certiorari and affirmed the court of appeal.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The Supreme Court reviewed the interpretation and application of the Louisiana Children's Code provisions governing juvenile delinquency time limits and remedies.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Louisiana Supreme Court opinion; binding precedent in Louisiana.
PARTIES	L.D. v. State of Louisiana

TOPICS

criminal procedure

statutory interpretation

writ of certiorari

mootness

appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

juvenile delinquency

criminal procedure

appellate procedure

statutory interpretation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the juvenile court had good cause under La. Ch. C. art. 854(C) to schedule L.D.'s answer hearing outside the five-day period required by article 854(A).
2. Whether an untimely answer hearing required dismissal of the delinquency petition or rendered the subsequent adjudication hearing untimely under a cascading or 'ripple effect' theory.
3. Whether L.D.'s failure to seek immediate review of the denial of release rendered the release issue moot after the adjudication occurred within the period specified by article 877(A).

HOLDINGS

1. A court's blanket scheduling practice or internal operating constraints do not constitute the case-specific good cause required by La. Ch. C. art. 854(C) to extend the five-day answer-hearing period for a juvenile in custody.
2. An untimely answer hearing does not automatically render the subsequent adjudication untimely or require dismissal when the adjudication occurs within the 30-day period measured from the answer hearing under La. Ch. C. art. 877(A).
3. Because L.D. did not seek expedited review of the juvenile court's erroneous refusal to release him and was later adjudicated within the article 877 period, the release issue became moot.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The court system cannot excuse itself from affording an accused a trial within the delay required by law, simply by relying upon internal operating procedures which result in noncompliance with the statutory mandate.” (149 So. 3d at 766)

“We think it clear that a blanket rule of local practice does not constitute one such case-specific instance supplanting a legislative mandate intended to promote the fair and expeditious conduct of juvenile delinquency proceedings.” (149 So. 3d at 767)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The State filed a delinquency petition against L.D. on September 5, 2013, while he remained in custody. The juvenile court scheduled the answer hearing for October 2, 2013—27 days after filing—based on a local practice treating court scheduling constraints as good cause for delay. L.D. objected and sought release and dismissal, but the court denied relief; he was adjudicated delinquent on October 23, 2013, within 30 days of the answer hearing.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The State filed a delinquency petition charging L.D. with felony-grade unauthorized use of a movable. Although the Louisiana Children's Code required an answer hearing within five days because L.D. remained in custody, the juvenile court scheduled it 27 days after filing and denied L.D.'s request for release and dismissal based on its finding of good cause. L.D. was adjudicated delinquent 21 days after the answer hearing, within the statutory 30-day adjudication period. The court of appeal affirmed in a split decision, and the Supreme Court affirmed, holding that the scheduling practice did not constitute good cause but that the untimely answer hearing did not invalidate the later adjudication and that the release issue became moot when L.D. failed to seek immediate review.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State in Interest of L.D., 14-0001 (La. App. 3 Cir. 5/7/14), 139 So. 3d 679
- State in the Interest of R.G., 06-1625, p. 3 (La. App. 4 Cir. 7/18/07), 963 So. 2d 475, 477
- State v. Driever, 347 So. 2d 1132, 1134 (La. 1977)