

SUPERIOR COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

In the Interest of: C.B., Appeal of: I.Q.

2026 Pa. Super. 84 · No. 899 WDA 2025 · Decided April 23, 2026

SUMMARY

The Pennsylvania Superior Court affirmed an order changing the permanency goal for C.B. from reunification to subsidized permanent legal custodianship. The court granted appointed counsel’s application to withdraw under Anders and held that the appellant’s challenges to the dependency adjudication, removal, alleged evidentiary errors, reasonable efforts, and constitutional rights were frivolous or not properly before the court.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Superior Court of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Beck, J.; Olson, J.; Murray, J.
JURISDICTION	Pennsylvania Superior Court
DECIDED	April 23, 2026
DOCKET	899 WDA 2025
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Stepfather appealed from an order changing C.B.'s permanency goal from reunification to subsidized permanent legal custodianship. Appointed appellate counsel filed an Anders application to withdraw and an Anders brief asserting that the appeal was frivolous.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	In dependency proceedings, appellate review is broad, but the appellate court accepts factual findings supported by the record and gives great weight to the juvenile court's credibility determinations. The appellate court independently reviews the juvenile court's inferences, deductions, and legal conclusions and reviews constitutional questions de novo under a plenary scope of review.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published and precedential
PARTIES	I.Q., Stepfather v. C.B., Minor, Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families

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PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether appellate counsel satisfied the Anders and dependency-specific withdrawal requirements.
2. Whether the juvenile court relied on inaccurate or fabricated evidence in changing C.B.'s permanency goal.
3. Whether Stepfather could collaterally challenge the 2023 dependency adjudication and removal order in an appeal from the later goal-change order.
4. Whether the goal change violated Stepfather's asserted federal and Pennsylvania constitutional rights to familial integrity.
5. Whether the evidence supported the juvenile court's findings under 42 Pa.C.S. § 6351(f)-(f.2), including the necessity and appropriateness of placement, progress toward alleviating the conditions causing placement, reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan, and the selection of legal custodianship.
6. Whether the juvenile court adequately considered the bond between C.B. and Stepfather.

HOLDINGS

1. Counsel complied with the Anders requirements, including the additional notice requirements applicable to dependency proceedings, after submitting a corrected letter advising Stepfather of his right to counsel in subsequent dependency or termination proceedings and his ability to seek new appointed counsel.
2. The challenge to C.B.'s dependency adjudication and removal was unavailable because the adjudication was a final, immediately appealable change of status and Stepfather did not timely appeal it; he could not mount a collateral attack in the later goal-change appeal.
3. The constitutional challenge was frivolous because parental control is not absolute and the Commonwealth may intervene to protect a child's welfare; C.B.'s safety, permanency, and well-being could take precedence over Stepfather's asserted familial-integrity interests.
4. The juvenile court did not abuse its discretion in determining that continued placement was necessary and appropriate, that Stepfather had made no appreciable progress toward alleviating the circumstances causing placement, that reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan were made, and that placement with a legal custodian rather than reunification or adoption was best suited to C.B.'s safety, protection, and welfare.
5. The bond challenge was frivolous because the juvenile court considered the evidence and reasonably inferred that no bond existed between C.B. and Stepfather after their prolonged lack of contact, while the evidence showed a secure attachment between C.B. and Foster Mother.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“After careful review, we grant Attorney Sontz’s petition to withdraw and affirm the goal change order.” (-1)

“A petitioning agency has the burden to show a goal change would serve the child’s “best interests,” and the “safety, permanency, and well-being of the child must take precedence over all other considerations” under section 6351.” (-21)

“Application to withdraw granted. Order affirmed.” (-26)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

C.B., born in May 2012, lived with her stepfather and half-siblings after her mother's death. In January 2023, C.B. disclosed that she and her seven-year-old half-sibling had been left alone for approximately ten days, and the evidence showed that Stepfather regularly left the children unattended for extended periods while working as a commercial driver. C.B. was placed in foster care, where she remained through the goal-change hearing; Stepfather thereafter had virtually no contact with C.B., declined supervised visitation, failed to cooperate with CYF, and did not complete court-ordered evaluations. At the June 2025 hearing, the juvenile court found that SPLC served C.B.'s best interests and changed the permanency goal from reunification to SPLC.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

C.B. was adjudicated dependent and placed in foster care in 2023 after evidence that Stepfather had left her and a younger child unsupervised for extended periods. The juvenile court later changed C.B.'s permanency goal from reunification to SPLC on June 24, 2025. Stepfather timely appealed, and the Superior Court reviewed counsel's Anders withdrawal application, Stepfather's pro se filings, and the merits of the potentially appealable claims.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Anders v. California, 386 U.S. 738 (1967)
- In re J.D.H., 171 A.3d 903, 906-07 (Pa. Super. 2017)
- In re Adoption of B.G.S., 240 A.3d 658, 661 (Pa. Super. 2020)
- Commonwealth v. Millisock, 873 A.2d 748, 752 (Pa. Super. 2005)
- Commonwealth v. Santiago, 978 A.2d 349, 361 (Pa. 2009)
- Commonwealth v. Bennett, 124 A.3d 327, 333 (Pa. Super. 2015)
- Interest of R.H., 320 A.3d 706, 714 (Pa. Super. 2024)
- In re E.B., 898 A.2d 1108, 1112 n.3 (Pa. Super. 2006)
- Croft v. Westmoreland County Children & Youth Services, 103 F.3d 1123, 1125 (3d Cir. 1997)
- Pennsylvania Game Commission v. Marich, 666 A.2d 253, 255 n.6 (Pa. 1995)
- Matter of Cabrera, 552 A.2d 1114, 1118 (Pa. Super. 1989)
- Prince v. Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158, 166-67 (1944)

- Interest of Y.W.-B., 265 A.3d 602, 615 (Pa. Super. 2021)
- In re R.M.G., 997 A.2d 339, 345, 347 (Pa. Super. 2010)
- Interest of D.G., 241 A.3d 1230, 1241 (Pa. Super. 2020)
- In re K.Z.S., 946 A.2d 753, 762-63 (Pa. Super. 2008)

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