

ARKANSAS COURT OF APPEALS, DIVISION IV

Katlyn Scott and Steven Scott v. Arkansas Department of Human Services and Minor Child

2026 Ark. App. 149 · No. CV-25-400 · Decided March 4, 2026

SUMMARY

The Arkansas Court of Appeals affirmed the termination of Katlyn Scott’s and Steven Scott’s parental rights to Minor Child. The court held that sufficient evidence supported the failure-to-remedy ground based on persistent environmental neglect and that termination was in the child’s best interest. The court also held that Katlyn’s argument concerning relative placement was not preserved for appeal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Arkansas Court of Appeals, Division IV
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Brandon J. Harrison; Tucker, J.; Thyer, J.
JURISDICTION	Arkansas Court of Appeals, Division IV
DECIDED	March 4, 2026
DOCKET	CV-25-400
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Parents appealed an order of the Scott County Circuit Court terminating both parents' parental rights to Minor Child.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The appellate court reviews termination-of-parental-rights proceedings de novo on the record but will not reverse unless the circuit court's findings are clearly erroneous. The court gives deference to the circuit court's ability to observe witnesses and assess credibility. The Department must prove termination grounds by clear and convincing evidence.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Arkansas Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Katlyn Scott, Steven Scott v. Arkansas Department of Human Services, Minor Child

TOPICS

termination of parental rights

parental rights

family law procedure

preservation of error

standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

family law

termination of parental rights

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether clear and convincing evidence supported termination of Steven Scott's parental rights under the twelve-month failure-to-remedy ground.
2. Whether Steven could challenge the alleged lack of meaningful DHS efforts when he had not appealed prior reasonable-efforts findings or raised the issue at the termination hearing.
3. Whether the evidence supported the finding that termination of both parents' parental rights was in Minor Child's best interest based on potential harm.
4. Whether the circuit court was required to resolve a possible relative placement with Katlyn's sister before terminating Katlyn's parental rights despite Katlyn's failure to preserve that argument below.

HOLDINGS

1. Clear and convincing evidence supported termination under the twelve-month failure-to-remedy ground because Steven failed to remedy the environmental neglect that caused Minor Child's removal and did not demonstrate an ability to provide a consistently safe home.
2. Steven could not raise the argument that DHS failed to make meaningful efforts because he did not appeal prior orders finding that DHS had made reasonable efforts and did not raise the issue at the termination hearing.
3. The circuit court's finding that termination was in Minor Child's best interest was supported by sufficient evidence of potential harm.
4. Katlyn's argument that termination should not occur before considering placement with her sister was not preserved for appellate review.
5. Proof of one statutory ground is sufficient to affirm termination when the best-interest requirement is satisfied.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"We must affirm the circuit court's finding that Steven failed to remedy the environmental neglect that caused MC's removal from the home, even if it was a closer call than some." (at 8)

"The ultimate issue in any termination-of-parental-rights case, regardless of a parent's compliance with a case plan, is whether the parent has become a stable, safe parent able to care for his or her child." (at 9)

"The potential-harm factor of the best-interest analysis does not require the circuit court to find actual harm would occur or affirmatively identify the potential harm." (at 9)

“We do not reverse a circuit court for ignoring relative-placement issues without evidence it was asked to consider them.” (at 10)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Minor Child was removed from the Scotts' custody after DHS found him feverish, lethargic, dirty, malodorous, and suffering from serious infections; the parents had failed to administer most of an antibiotic prescribed after an earlier emergency-room visit. DHS also found severe environmental neglect in the home, including animal feces and urine, trash, debris, and unsafe conditions. During the case, the parents separated, Katlyn had unstable housing and employment, and Steven continued living in housing with unsafe and unsanitary conditions that DHS was sometimes unable to inspect. DHS petitioned to terminate parental rights after approximately nineteen months, while a possible placement with the child's maternal aunt remained under consideration.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The circuit court adjudicated Minor Child dependent-neglected in December 2023 based on medical and environmental neglect. After continued review and permanency hearings, the court terminated both parents' parental rights, finding three statutory grounds and determining that termination was in the child's best interest. Steven challenged the evidentiary sufficiency of the termination grounds and best-interest finding; Katlyn challenged the best-interest determination based on the court's failure to resolve a possible relative placement with her sister before termination. The Arkansas Court of Appeals affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Scott v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2024 Ark. App. 517, 699 S.W.3d 851
- Boomhower v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2019 Ark. App. 397, 587 S.W.3d 231
- Ring v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2021 Ark. App. 146, at 5, 620 S.W.3d 551, 555
- Lindsey v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2025 Ark. App. 491
- Wagner v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2023 Ark. App. 400, 675 S.W.3d 469
- Yarbrough v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2016 Ark. App. 429, at 7–8, 501 S.W.3d 839, 843–44
- Cobb v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2017 Ark. App. 85, 512 S.W.3d 694
- Phillips v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2020 Ark. App. 169, 596 S.W.3d 91
- Borah v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2020 Ark. App. 491, 612 S.W.3d 749
- Hile v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2023 Ark. App. 173
- Huggins v. Ark. Dep't of Hum. Servs., 2022 Ark. App. 371