

TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS, THIRD DISTRICT, AT AUSTIN

C. R. F. v. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

No. 03-25-00750-CV (Tex. App.—Austin Mar. 27, 2026) · No. 03-25-00750-CV · Decided March 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The Texas Court of Appeals, Third District, reviews an order terminating C.R.F.’s parental rights to three children under Texas Family Code sections 161.001(b)(1)(D), (E), and (b)(2). The court addresses the sufficiency of the evidence concerning reasonable reunification efforts, statutory endangerment grounds, and the children’s best interests. The opinion states that the trial court’s termination order is affirmed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Texas Court of Appeals, Third District, at Austin
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Karin Crump; Chief Justice Byrne; Justice Crump; Justice Ellis
JURISDICTION	Texas Court of Appeals, Third District, Austin
DECIDED	March 27, 2026
DOCKET	03-25-00750-CV
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Mother appealed after a bench trial and order terminating her parental rights, challenging the sufficiency of the evidence supporting statutory predicate grounds, the children's best interests, the Department's reasonable reunification efforts, and the appointment of the Department as permanent managing conservator.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Termination of parental rights requires clear and convincing evidence of at least one statutory predicate ground and that termination is in the child's best interest. Legal sufficiency is reviewed by viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the finding while considering undisputed contrary evidence; factual sufficiency requires weighing disputed contrary evidence against the evidence supporting the finding, with due deference to the factfinder. The appellate court conducts an exacting review because parental rights are constitutionally protected.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published memorandum opinion; precedential status is stated as published in the supplied metadata.

TOPICS

termination of parental rights

parental rights

family law procedure

appellate procedure

evidence

PRACTICE AREAS

family law

termination of parental rights

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evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether legally and factually sufficient evidence supported the finding that the Department made reasonable efforts to reunify the children with Mother.
2. Whether legally and factually sufficient evidence supported termination under Texas Family Code section 161.001(b)(1)(D).
3. Whether legally and factually sufficient evidence supported the finding that termination was in the children's best interests.
4. Whether Mother had standing to challenge the appointment of the Department as the children's permanent managing conservator after her parental rights were terminated.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was legally sufficient to support the finding that the Department made reasonable efforts to return the children to Mother.
2. The evidence was legally and factually sufficient to establish that Mother knowingly placed the children in conditions or surroundings that endangered their physical or emotional well-being.
3. The evidence was legally and factually sufficient to support the finding that termination of Mother's parental rights was in the children's best interests.
4. After the termination order was upheld, Mother lacked standing to challenge the appointment of the Department as the children's permanent managing conservator.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A correspondingly searching standard of appellate review is an essential procedural adjunct." (10)

"We conclude that the evidence is legally and factually sufficient to support a finding that Mother knowingly placed the children in conditions or surroundings which endangered their physical or emotional well-being so as to support a finding of endangerment under subsection (D)." (17)

"Viewing the evidence presented at trial in the light most favorable to the trial court's finding, we conclude that a reasonable factfinder could form a firm belief or conviction that termination of Mother's parental rights was in the children's best interest." (20)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mother was arrested after fleeing from a sheriff's deputy at night with her three children in the vehicle, driving at speeds exceeding 100 miles per hour and continuing until police deployed a tire-deflation device. The children were removed after officers found them in the vehicle; they had been traveling and sleeping in the car, and two appeared dirty, while the youngest lacked shoes and socks. The Department provided a reunification service plan, but Mother moved from Texas to New Mexico, did not provide the requested drug-test results, and had contentious communications with the Department and the children's placement. At trial, the children were thriving in a relative placement that the Department and Mother agreed was appropriate.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Following a bench trial in the 155th District Court of Fayette County, the trial court terminated C.R.F.'s parental rights to three children, finding endangerment under Texas Family Code sections 161.001(b)(1)(D) and (E), that termination was in the children's best interests, and that the Department made reasonable efforts toward reunification. The Third Court of Appeals affirmed. Justice Ellis concurred in part and dissented in part, agreeing that the predicate grounds and reunification-efforts findings were sufficient but concluding that the best-interest evidence was legally and factually insufficient.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- In re R.R.A., 687 S.W.3d 269, 271 (Tex. 2024)
- In re A.V., 113 S.W.3d 355, 362 (Tex. 2003)
- In re A.C., 560 S.W.3d 624, 626, 630-31 (Tex. 2018)
- Holick v. Smith, 685 S.W.2d 18, 20 (Tex. 1985)
- Santosky v. Kramer, 455 U.S. 745, 759 (1982)
- In re F.E.N., 542 S.W.3d 752, 766 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2018, pet. denied)
- In re J.G.S., 550 S.W.3d 698, 704-05 (Tex. App.—El Paso 2018, no pet.)
- In re M.V.G., 440 S.W.3d 54, 61 (Tex. App.—Waco 2010, no pet.)
- In re M.N.M., 708 S.W.3d 321, 328 (Tex. App.—Eastland 2025, pet. denied)
- Texas Dep't of Human Servs. v. Boyd, 727 S.W.2d 531, 533 (Tex. 1987)
- A.S. v. Texas Dep't of Fam. & Protective Servs., 394 S.W.3d 703, 713 (Tex. App.—El Paso 2012, no pet.)
- In re S.H.A., 728 S.W.2d 73, 85 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1987, writ ref'd n.r.e.)
- J.G. v. Texas Dep't of Fam. & Protective Servs., 592 S.W.3d 515, 524 (Tex. App.—Austin 2019, no pet.)
- C.B. v. Texas Dep't of Fam. & Protective Servs., 458 S.W.3d 576, 582 (Tex. App.—El Paso 2014, pet. denied)
- In re J.E.M.M., 532 S.W.3d 874, 881 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2017, no pet.)
- Holley v. Adams, 544 S.W.2d 367, 371-72 (Tex. 1976)
- In re C.H., 89 S.W.3d 17, 27 (Tex. 2002)
- In re J.D.G., 570 S.W.3d 839, 856 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2018, pet. denied)

- In re J.W., 645 S.W.3d 726, 751 (Tex. 2022)
- C.C. v. Texas Dep't of Fam. & Protective Servs., 653 S.W.3d 204, 217 (Tex. App.—Austin 2022, no pet.)
- In re C.A.M., 633 S.W.3d 68, 76 (Tex. App.—Amarillo 2021, no pet.)
- In re J.A.J., 243 S.W.3d 611, 616 (Tex. 2007)
- In re K.M.P., 323 S.W.3d 601, 604-05 (Tex. App.—Austin 2010, pet. denied)
- In re D.S., 602 S.W.3d 504, 518 (Tex. 2020) (Lehrmann, J., concurring)
- Good Shepherd Med. Ctr. v. State, 306 S.W.3d 825, 837 (Tex. App.—Austin 2010, no pet.)

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