

ARKANSAS COURT OF APPEALS, DIVISION I

Jose Miguel Quiroz Mata v. Yudith Cicard Reyes

Quiroz Mata, 2026 Ark. App. 229 (Ark. Ct. App. 2026) · No. CV-25-541 · Decided April 15, 2026

SUMMARY

The Arkansas Court of Appeals reversed and remanded a Saline County Circuit Court custody order awarding primary custody to Yudith Cicard Reyes. The court held that the circuit court failed to make the written findings required to rebut the statutory presumption favoring joint custody, including findings based on clear and convincing evidence regarding the child’s best interest.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Arkansas Court of Appeals, Division I
WRITING FOR THE COURT	N. Mark Klappenbach, Chief Judge; Gladwin, J.; Hixson, J.
JURISDICTION	Arkansas Court of Appeals, Division I
DECIDED	April 15, 2026
DOCKET	CV-25-541
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from an order of the Saline County Circuit Court awarding Yudith Cicard Reyes primary custody of the parties' minor child in a divorce proceeding.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Child-custody matters are reviewed de novo, but the circuit court's findings will not be reversed unless clearly erroneous. Special deference is given to the circuit court's superior position to evaluate witnesses, testimony, and the child's best interest.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Arkansas Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Jose Miguel Quiroz Mata v. Yudith Cicard Reyes

TOPICS

- child custody
- family law procedure
- appellate procedure
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- family law
- appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the circuit court properly rebutted the statutory presumption that joint custody is in the child's best interest.
2. Whether the circuit court was required to make specific written findings, including findings based on clear and convincing evidence, before awarding primary custody rather than joint custody.

HOLDINGS

1. The circuit court did not adequately rebut the statutory presumption favoring joint custody because its order neither referenced the presumption nor found by clear and convincing evidence that joint custody was not in the child's best interest.
2. The custody order was legally insufficient because it did not contain the specific written facts, findings, and conclusions of law required by Arkansas Code Annotated section 9-13-101(b)(3)(A).

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Without the required written findings, we have no way to reliably determine whether the court properly analyzed the facts under the statute.” (at 2)

“Due to the statute’s requirement for specific written findings, we cannot presume that the circuit court made such findings as were necessary to support its decision.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The parties married in 2008 and have a minor child, MC, born in 2012. In 2024, Mata filed for divorce and requested joint custody; Reyes sought primary custody. After a January 28, 2025 hearing, the circuit court awarded Reyes primary custody and granted Mata visitation, citing his lack of a stable place to live, his not having seen the child for six months, his living with his sister, and his not working full time.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Jose Miguel Quiroz Mata filed for divorce and requested joint custody of the parties' minor child; Yudith Cicard Reyes counterclaimed for primary custody. After a final hearing, the circuit court awarded Reyes primary custody and Mata specified visitation. Mata moved for reconsideration, which was deemed denied, and appealed. The Arkansas Court of Appeals reversed and remanded for specific written findings concerning the statutory presumption favoring joint custody.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Saline County Circuit Court must make the necessary specific written findings concerning whether the statutory presumption favoring joint custody has been rebutted.

CASES CITED

- McCandlis v. McCandlis, 2024 Ark. App. 339
- Porter v. Jackson, 2025 Ark. App. 605

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