

Circuit Court for Baltimore City
Case No. 820307001J, --2J, --3J, & --4J

UNREPORTED
IN THE APPELLATE COURT
OF MARYLAND*

No. 2264

September Term, 2024

IN RE: L.B., S.B., K.B., & M.B.

Nazarian,
Beachley,
Harrell, Glenn T., Jr.
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

Opinion by Harrell, J.

Filed: October 7, 2025

*This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for its persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

In 2020, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (the “Department”), pursuant to an emergency shelter care order issued by the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, sitting as the juvenile court, removed L.B., S.B., K.B., and M.B., minor children of Mr. B. (“Father”) from Father’s care. The children were placed in the care of Father’s cousin, S.S. In 2021, the juvenile court found all four children to be children in need of assistance (“CINA”) and ordered that they remain in S.S.’s care. In 2024, following a hearing, a magistrate recommended that the juvenile court grant custody and guardianship of the children to S.S. Father filed exceptions. The juvenile court, following a hearing, denied the exceptions and ordered that custody and guardianship of the children be granted to S.S. Father noted this timely appeal.

In this appeal, Father presents two questions for our consideration, which we have rephrased slightly:

1. Did the juvenile court err or abuse its discretion in granting custody and guardianship of the children to S.S.?
2. Did the juvenile court err or abuse its discretion in finding that the Department made “reasonable efforts” to effectuate reunification of Father and the children?

Finding no error or abuse of discretion, we affirm.

BACKGROUND

L.B. and S.B. were born in 2009 and 2011, respectively, to Father and Ms. M. At all times relevant here, Ms. M. did not participate in L.B. or S.B.’s care.

At some point, Father began a relationship with A.S. (“Mother”), who provided care for L.B. and S.B. Father and Mother had two more children: K.B., born in 2013, and M.B., born in 2019.

In September 2020, the Department was contacted after S.B. reported that she saw Father and Mother injecting needles into their necks and selling steroids. When contacted by the Department, Father admitted to “taking over-the-counter steroids.” Both Father and Mother denied using illicit substances and refused to participate in a substance abuse assessment arranged by the Department. S.B. recanted ultimately her allegations, claiming that she was “mad” at Mother and Father when she communicated as she did to the Department.

On 20 October 2020, Baltimore City Police officers responded to the family home for “a family disturbance” complaint. The following day, a warrant was issued for Father’s arrest on charges of robbery, theft, and assault, all of which arose out of the incident that occurred at the family home the previous day. According to the statement of charges, the incident commenced when Father “tugged” Mother out of the shower. The two “tussled over [F]ather having [M]other’s purse.” As a result, Father was arrested and ordered not to have any contact with Mother.

On 26 October 2020, Mother was transported to the hospital for “hallucinations.” According to her medical records, Mother took “Molly three days before.” Mother’s medical records mentioned also diagnoses of Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Active Substance Abuse. Mother denied having gone to the hospital. She told the Department that she had been diagnosed with anxiety and depression.

Around that same time, the Department learned that, in 2012, Mother had been indicated for neglect of her oldest child, M.W. In addition, the Department learned that K.B., who was approximately seven years old at the time, needed heart surgery “since he was a baby.”

On 30 October 2020, the Department removed the children from the home and placed them with Father’s cousin, S.S. The Department filed a CINA petition on behalf of the children on 2 November 2020, requesting that the children remain in shelter care. That same day, the juvenile court granted the Department’s request for continued shelter care and ordered that the children remain in S.S.’s care.

The parties returned to court in December 2020 for the first of several adjudication hearings on the Department’s CINA petition. At that hearing, the Department stated that it wanted Mother and Father to participate in drug treatment, parenting classes, and domestic violence classes. The Department advocated that Father participate in anger management classes. Ultimately, the court continued the matter and ordered that the children remain in S.S.’s care. The court ordered also that Mother and Father were entitled to weekly visits with the children.

The children’s counsel moved to suspend Mother and Father’s in-person visitation privileges in April 2021, in favor of virtual supervised visits. Following a hearing, the court granted the motion. In so doing, the court found that Mother and Father’s in-person visits with the children had “not been without significant issue.” The court found that, during those visits, Mother and Father continued to “disparage the caseworker in front of the children” and “continue[d] to discuss the allegations of the case with the [children] which

often le[d] to the [children] becoming visibly upset[.]” The court found that, on several occasions, L.B. attempted to defend his siblings, at which point Father would “invite[] [L.B.] to get into a physical altercation with him.” The court noted that “Father’s explosive anger is at the forefront of each visit” and that Mother “does not intervene, re-direct, or protect her children from Father.” The court noted further that Mother and Father “missed more visits than they have kept” and that, when they do attend visits, they “present with bruising all over their bodies and/or appear to be under the influence.” As a result of the visits, the children “started displaying psychosomatic symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, and upset stomachs every time they are scheduled for visitation.” The court concluded that the current visitation arrangement was “not assuring the [children’s] safety, physiological, psychological or emotional well-being” and that it was “not in the [children’s] best interest to continue visiting with the parents in-person.”

In June 2021, the parties returned to court for the conclusion of the adjudication hearings. The court declared that the existing orders would continue pending disposition of the CINA matter.

The court held a disposition hearing in December 2021. At the conclusion of that hearing, the court found the children to be CINA. The court found further that the children had been emotionally abused by Mother and Father and that the children were at risk of additional abuse absent “sufficient progress to improve Mother’s mental health, substance use and Mother’s and Father’s conflictual relationship and parenting behaviors[.]” The court concluded that Mother and Father were not ready to have the children return to the family home, which additionally had yet to pass a Home Health and Safety Assessment.

The court noted that: the Department provided Mother and Father with multiple service plans; Father opposed the service plan requirements, absent a court order; Mother “engaged in some services intermittently”; and, Mother and Father attended “50% of their parenting time.” Before the children could be returned to the family home, the court directed that “individual and family counseling therapy, proof of income, home inspection and Mother’s CDS treatment and medication compliance verification [was] required.”

Over the next year, the court scheduled several review hearings. In November 2022, the court permitted Mother and Father to have in-person visits with the youngest child, M.B. The court permitted also Mother and Father to have supervised in-person visitations with the other three children “only if [the] children agree[.]”

In December 2022, the parties returned to court for another review hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing, the court changed the children’s permanency plan from reunification with the parents to a concurrent plan of reunification with the parents and placement with a relative for custody and guardianship. In so doing, the court noted that the children had been in S.S.’s care for over two years and that they were all doing well. The court found that Mother’s and Father’s progress toward alleviating the problems that led to commitment was “adequate.” The court acknowledged that Mother and Father both signed service agreements and that, although their home had yet to pass a home health inspection, they had complied with some of the tasks outlined in the service agreements. The court found that the Department made reasonable efforts in facilitating reunification, including entering into service agreements, making home visits, making referrals for

counseling or therapy, providing financial assistance, and ensuring that the children’s various needs were being met.

In May 2023, the Department arranged an in-person visit with all four children at Mother and Father’s home. During that visit, Father and L.B. got into an argument after Father tried to hug L.B. and L.B. refused. The two “started yelling at each other[,]” and Father “ended up punching a wall” and “kicking stuff and throwing stuff[.]” After that incident, L.B., K.B., and S.B. began refusing visits with Mother and Father.

In January 2024, a review hearing was held before a magistrate. At the conclusion of the hearing, the magistrate recommended that custody and guardianship of the children be awarded to S.S. Mother and Father requested a *de novo* exceptions hearing before the juvenile court.

Exceptions Hearing

At the exceptions hearing, Pensee Tambe, a caseworker with the Department, testified that she was assigned as the caseworker for the family in June 2022. She recounted that: the children had been in S.S.’s care since October 2020; their educational, physical, and mental health needs were being met; and, they were progressing nicely. Ms. Tambe explained that the Department prepared a custody and guardianship study for each child. According to those studies, which were admitted into evidence, the Department determined that custody and guardianship of the children should be granted to S.S. The studies indicated also that S.S. was eligible for (and would receive) financial assistance from the Department if the children were to remain in her custody.

Ms. Tambe testified that Father signed a service agreement. Per the terms of the agreement, Father needed to cooperate with the Department, obtain a mental health evaluation, complete parenting classes, prepare his home to pass a home inspection, and pursue anger management. She acknowledged that, as of the date of the hearing, Father completed all of the required tasks, except providing documentation that he was engaged in mental health treatment and domestic violence treatment, even though Ms. Tambe had multiple conversations with Father about obtaining such services. Ms. Tambe expressed the view that Father needed those services in order to reunify with the children. According to her, Father stated that he does not need mental health counseling or domestic violence treatment. When talking to Ms. Tambe, Father would get angry and talk “negatively” about S.S. During one phone conversation, which occurred on 12 December 2024, Father screamed at her and called her “the F word” after Ms. Tambe told him that she would be unable to attend a planned supervised visit.

As to Mother’s services, Ms. Tambe explained that the Department asked Mother to obtain mental health treatment, complete parenting classes, obtain anger management treatment, seek employment, and provide evidence that she was not using drugs. Mother failed to provide any documentation that she was engaged in mental health treatment, had been discharged successfully from mental health treatment, or had completed domestic violence treatment. Mother maintained that she no longer needed mental health treatment.

Ms. Tambe testified that Mother and Father had been engaging recently in weekly, one-hour visits with the youngest child, M.B. The Department tried to encourage the other

three children to engage in visitation, but the children refused. The Department tried also to engage the children in family therapy, but they were unwilling.

Jacqueline Covington, a licensed clinical social worker, testified that she provided therapeutic services to K.B. and S.B. since February 2021. In preparation for the hearing, Ms. Covington prepared two reports, one for each child, which were admitted into evidence. Regarding K.B., she reported that K.B. had “shown progress in therapy” and had “expressed a range of complex emotions regarding visits with his parents.” K.B. stated that he felt “scared” by his Father, had feelings of “discomfort” when visiting with his parents, and oftentimes did not want to talk about his parents. Ms. Covington reported that S.B. was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and that, although she made progress in managing her anxiety, she continued to experience symptoms. S.B. reported that those symptoms, which included psychosomatic issues, were exacerbated by the visits with her parents. All of the children reported having a strong and supportive relationship with S.S.

S.S. testified that the children were doing well in her care and that she wanted them to remain in her care. S.S. lived also with her daughter and her daughter’s son. Everyone got along well. If she were granted custody, S.S. would encourage the children to have a relationship with Mother and Father. S.S. testified that she had been encouraging the children to visit with Mother and Father, but the three eldest children refused flatly. Although M.B. was engaging in recent visits, M.B. stated that she “didn’t want nobody at school to know that she had other parents.”

Father testified that he wanted the children to “slowly be brung back home.” Father acknowledged that he was not employed currently due to health issues. He believed that

the visits with M.B. were going well. He claimed to have “finished everything” on the service agreement and believed that the children “would be probably coming back home.” Mother believed also that she completed all of the tasks assigned to her.

The court conducted *in camera* interviews with each child. L.B., K.B., and S.B. reported that they did not want to go back and live with Mother and Father. L.B. added that he was unable to “even see [Father] without trying to fight him.” M.B., who was only five years old at the time, provided terse and sometimes conflicting responses to the court’s various questions.¹

At the conclusion of the hearing, the court denied Mother’s and Father’s exceptions and granted custody and guardianship of all four children to S.S. In so doing, the court found that the children were doing very well in their current placement and that S.S. was doing a good job of meeting the children’s needs. The court found also the children’s bond with S.S. and each other to be strong. The court noted that the three oldest children “look[ed] to [S.S.] and her in-house extended family as their parents.”

Regarding Mother and Father, the court observed that, although they completed some of the tasks recommended by the Department, they had not shown successfully that they engaged in the requisite mental health treatment. The court noted that Mother had “not successfully been discharged from therapy” and that Father continued to have anger issues. The court found that the Department made reasonable efforts to provide services to Mother

¹ For instance, the court asked M.B. if she visited with her parents. M.B. stated, “No.” The court asked then if her parents “come see [her] at some center[.]” M.B. stated, “Yeah.”

and Father, including attempting to arrange visits and family therapy, but that the children refused both. The court commented that the three eldest children had not visited with Mother and Father since May 2023 and that K.B. and S.B. experienced severe negative reactions to visiting with Mother and Father. The court noted that, although the youngest child, M.B., had been visiting with the parents, those visits had been conducted “cautiously under the presence of [S.S.]” In her *in camera* interview, the judge sensed M.B. appeared “weary or anticipatory of what may occur” in the visitations. The court found that the Department had “no further services or resources” to offer the parents and that it could not “force and/or compel ... the three oldest children to form a relationship with their parents.” The court noted that the three eldest children did not want to reunify with Mother and Father and that the youngest child, M.B., was “attached to her siblings, [S.S.], and her extended family.” The judge characterized the children’s emotional ties to Mother and Father as “weak.” The court described the case before it as “one of pressure and time[,]” noting that “four years have passed since the children have been in care with [S.S.] and circumstances, therapy, maturation of the [children], mostly compliance of the parents and efforts of [the Department] have not led to reunification.”

Upon consideration of “the testimony, exhibits and evidence in this case[,]” the court determined that custody and guardianship of the children should be granted to S.S. The court concluded that it was not in the children’s best interest to remain under further court supervision, “which for four years plus has not led to reunification[,]” and that the children would suffer “irreparable harm” if they were returned to Mother and Father’s care.

On 13 January 2025, the court entered an order granting custody and guardianship of all four children to S.S. and terminating the court’s jurisdiction over the case. Father thereafter noted this timely appeal.

L.B.’s Case Severed and Remanded

While Father’s appeal was pending, L.B. moved to have his case severed and remanded to the juvenile court for further proceedings in light of certain material changed circumstances affecting his status that arose after the filing of this appeal. We granted L.B.’s request and ordered his case severed and remanded. This Court ordered further that the instant appeal would proceed as to the remaining three children.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Appellate review of the juvenile court’s decision involves three interrelated standards. *In re M.*, 251 Md. App. 86, 110 (2021). First, factual findings are reviewed for clear error. *Id.* at 111. Second, legal conclusions are reviewed *de novo*. *Id.* Finally, if the court’s ultimate conclusion is “‘founded upon sound legal principles and based upon factual findings that are not clearly erroneous, the court’s decision should be disturbed only if there has been a clear abuse of discretion.’” *Id.* (quoting *In re Adoption/Guardianship of C.E.*, 464 Md. 26, 47 (2019)). Under the abuse of discretion standard, “we will not reverse the trial court unless its decision is ‘well removed from any center mark imagined by the reviewing court.’” *Santo v. Santo*, 448 Md. 620, 626 (2016) (cleaned up) (quoting *In re Adoption/Guardianship No. 3598*, 347 Md. 295, 313 (1997)). “A [juvenile] court’s finding regarding whether the Department made reasonable efforts ... is a factual finding that the

appellate court reviews pursuant to the clearly erroneous standard.” *In re Shirley B.*, 191 Md. App. 678, 708 (2010).

DISCUSSION

I.

Parties’ Contentions

Father contends that the juvenile court erred in granting custody and guardianship of S.B., K.B., and M.B. to S.S. He argues that “[t]here is nothing to indicate [he and Mother] could not maintain the children’s safety and health in their home.” Father notes that the family home passed the safety inspection and that, prior to May 2023, “the children were having positive visits with their parents.” Although Father concedes that the May 2023 incident “complicated the[] relationship[,]” he maintains that the Department has “not made any recommendation toward family therapy to help repair the family unit[.]” Father conceives that further time in State custody, along with a gradual return of the children to their parents’ custody, would not upset the children’s emotional and developmental well-being and would “allow healing to occur.”

For its part, the Department contends that the juvenile court did not abuse its discretion in granting custody and guardianship to S.S. It argues that the evidence demonstrates that the children would not be safe in their parents’ care and they have a strong attachment to S.S. and a weak attachment to their parents. The Department asserts that, because the children were in the Department’s care for over four years, maintaining that status would be contrary to the children’s best interest and the purpose of the CINA statute.

Analysis

Where, as here, a child is declared a CINA and is placed outside of the family home, a court ““must determine a permanency plan consistent with the child’s best interests.”” *In re M.*, 251 Md. App. at 115 (quoting *In re Andre J.*, 223 Md. App. 305, 320 (2015)). Although a court is required generally to prioritize reunification with the child’s natural parents when determining a permanency plan, a court may include custody or guardianship by a relative. Md. Code, Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-823(e). “If the permanency plan calls for custody and guardianship by a relative but does not contemplate adoption, the court may issue a decree of guardianship to the relative and may then close the case.” *In re Caya B.*, 153 Md. App. 63, 78 (2003). In all cases, “[e]very reasonable effort shall be made to effectuate a permanent placement for the child within 24 months after the date of initial placement.” Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-823(h)(5).

Before granting custody and guardianship, the court is required to consider: 1) any assurance by the Department that it will provide funds to support the child; 2) all factors necessary to determine the child’s best interest; and 3) a report from the Department as to the suitability of the guardian to care for the child. Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-819.2(f)(1). Regarding the factors necessary to determine the child’s best interest, we have interpreted those factors as being comparable to the factors a court must consider when developing or changing a child’s permanency plan. *In re M.*, 251 Md. App. at 117-18. Those factors are:

- (i) the child’s ability to be safe and healthy in the home of the child’s parent;
- (ii) the child’s attachment and emotional ties to the child’s natural parents and siblings;

(iii) the child’s emotional attachment to the child’s current caregiver and the caregiver’s family;

(iv) the length of time the child has resided with the current caregiver;

(v) the potential emotional, developmental, and educational harm to the child if moved from the child’s current placement; and

(vi) the potential harm to the child by remaining in State custody for an excessive period of time.

Md. Code, Fam. Law § 5-525(f)(1).

Against that backdrop, we conclude that the juvenile court did not err or abuse its discretion in granting custody of the children to S.S. The evidence established that the Department prepared a custody and guardianship study, finding S.S. to be a suitable resource. Given that the court made clear that it considered all the evidence and testimony before reaching its decision, the record shows that the court, in awarding custody and guardianship to S.S., considered properly both the Department’s assurances that it would provide funds to S.S. and the Department’s reports regarding S.S.’s suitability as a caregiver.

As for the factors necessary to determine the children’s best interest, the court considered whether the children would be safe and healthy in the family home, concluding reasonably that the children would suffer “irreparable harm” if returned to Mother and Father’s care. As the court noted, although Mother and Father complied mostly with the Department’s requests, they failed to evince compliance with one of the biggest impediments to reunification, namely, procuring appropriate mental health treatment to address, among other things, Father’s anger issues. It is evident that Father’s anger was a

root cause of the family’s internal strife and was a contributing, if not primary, factor in the court’s decision to conclude the parents’ in-person visitation rights and in the eldest three children’s decision to refuse further visitation and family therapy following the May 2023 incident in which Father got into an altercation with L.B. at the family home. Despite those incidents, and despite the Department’s repeated requests that Father receive mental health treatment, Father refused to comply, telling the Department’s caseworker, Ms. Tambe, that he did not need therapy and claiming at the exceptions hearing that he had “finished everything.”

Moreover, the three eldest children stated unequivocally that they did not want to return to the family home. Each expressed negative feelings and reactions about being in Mother and Father’s presence. L.B. told the court that he could not “even see [Father] without trying to fight him.” K.B. told his therapist, Ms. Covington, that he was “scared” by Father and that he had feelings of “discomfort” when visiting with his parents. S.B., who suffered from severe anxiety, told Ms. Covington that her anxiety was made worse by her visits with her parents and that she suffered psychosomatic symptoms before and after visits. As for M.B., although there was evidence indicating that her recent visits with Mother and Father had been positive, she was attached clearly to S.S., having been in S.S.’s care for almost three-quarters of her life. In fact, M.B. told S.S. that she did not want anyone at school to know that she had parents other than S.S.

Regarding the children’s relationships with the relevant parties, the court found that the children’s attachments and emotional ties with respect to S.S., S.S.’s family, and each other, were significant. As the court explained, the children developed a strong bond with

S.S. and each other. The children considered S.S. and S.S.’s extended family to be part of their family. The court found that the children’s emotional, developmental, and educational needs were well met in S.S.’s care, and the court concluded that those needs would be harmed if the children were removed.

As to Mother and Father, the court concluded reasonably that the children’s attachments and emotional ties were “weak.” At the time of the court’s ruling, the three eldest children had not seen Mother and Father in over eighteen months. None of them exhibited positive feelings about either parent or expressed any desire to foster the relationship. As for M.B., although there was some evidence that she had positive interactions with Mother and Father during recent visits, those visits had been sporadic. When the visits did occur, they were relatively brief and infrequent (occurring, at most, once per week and lasting one hour per visit) and were conducted “cautiously under the presence of [S.S.]” When M.B. was questioned *in camera* about those visits, M.B. appeared “weary or anticipatory of what may occur.” Thus, while there was evidence of some attachment between M.B. and her parents, there was competing evidence indicating little to no attachment or emotional tie.

Lastly, the court concluded reasonably that the children had spent a significant amount of time in S.S.’s care and that that it was not in the children’s best interest to remain in State custody. At the time of the court’s ruling, the children had been in State custody over four years, well beyond the two-year time frame for permanent placement established by the CINA statutory scheme. *See* Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 3-823(h)(5). Over that time, the children remained in S.S.’s care. Neither Mother nor Father made the strides necessary to

overcome the barriers to reunification. None of the three eldest children appeared to want a relationship with Mother and Father. M.B. had grown irrevocably “attached to her siblings, [S.S.], and her extended family.” At that point, the Department had “no further services or resources” to offer the parents, and it could not “force and/or compel ... the three oldest children to form a relationship with their parents.”

In light of those findings and the evidence presented at the exceptions hearing, it is clear that the court considered properly the requisite factors and exercised sound discretion in reaching its decision. We hold, therefore, that the court did not err or abuse its discretion in granting custody and guardianship of the children to S.S.

II.

Father next claims that the juvenile court erred in finding that the Department had made “reasonable efforts.” He argues that he completed all tasks required of him and that it was the Department that failed to secure the requisite documentation. He claims also that the Department failed to encourage visitations and failed to arrange for family therapy.

The Department retorts that the court’s “reasonable efforts” finding was proper. It contends that it made every reasonable effort toward reunification, “but the parents’ conduct and unwillingness thwarted those efforts.”

Generally, the Department is required to make reasonable efforts “to preserve and reunify families: (i) prior to the placement of a child in an out-of-home placement, to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child from the child’s home; and (ii) to make it possible for a child to safely return to the child’s home.” Fam. Law § 5-525(e)(1). “[T]here is no bright line rule to apply to the ‘reasonable efforts’ determination; each case

must be decided based on its unique circumstances.” *In re Shirley B.*, 191 Md. App. at 710-11. At a minimum, the Department must “make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families and to make it possible for a child to safely return to the child’s home.” *In re Adoption/Guardianship of Rashawn H.*, 402 Md. 477, 500 (2007) (cleaned up). As such, when a juvenile court considers the services provided by the Department, the court should be mindful that a reasonable level of those services must be “designed to address both the root causes and the effect of the problem[.]” *Id.*

That said, there are limits to what is required of the Department. The Department “is not obliged to find employment for the parent, to find and pay for permanent and suitable housing for the family, to bring the parent out of poverty, or to cure or ameliorate any disability that prevents the parent from being able to care for the child.” *Id.* Rather, the Department “must provide reasonable assistance in helping the parent to achieve those goals, but its duty to protect the health and safety of the children is not lessened and cannot be cast aside if the parent, despite that assistance, remains unable or unwilling to provide appropriate care.” *Id.* at 500-01. In short, the Department “need not expend futile efforts on plainly recalcitrant parents[.]” *In re James G.*, 178 Md. App. 543, 601 (2008).

With those principles in mind, we hold that the juvenile court did not err in finding that the Department made “reasonable efforts.” The record shows that the Department provided a number of resources to both Mother and Father over the four years that the children were in State custody, including assigning a caseworker, engaging in periodic reviews, entering into service agreements, making home visits, making referrals for counseling or therapy, providing financial assistance, facilitating visitation,

communicating with the parties, and ensuring that the children’s various needs were being met. Despite those efforts, all of which were designed to ameliorate the impediments to reunification, Mother and Father were unable or unwilling to provide the appropriate care, and the eldest children became unwilling ultimately to repair the relationship that had been damaged by Mother’s and Father’s actions. At that point, there was little, if anything, the Department could do reasonably to reunify the family. Moreover, in order for the Department’s service obligation to continue, the children would have had to remain in State custody. As the court found, such a result would have been contrary to the children’s best interest, as they had already been in State custody for over four years, and there was little to no indication that returning the children to Mother and Father’s care would be appropriate. *In re Adoption/Guardianship of C.A. & D.A.*, 234 Md. App. 30, 48 (2017) (“[I]n all cases where the interests of a child are in jeopardy the paramount consideration is what will best promote the child’s welfare, a consideration that is of transcendent importance.” (cleaned up) (quoting *In re Adoption/Guardianship No. A91-71A*, 334 Md. 538, 561 (1994))).

Regarding Father’s argument that the Department failed to obtain the requisite documentation, encourage visitations, or arrange for family therapy, the Department’s caseworker, Ms. Tambe, testified that she tried to obtain the requisite documentation from Father regarding his mental health treatment, but Father refused. Ms. Tambe testified also that she tried to encourage visitations and to arrange family therapy, but the children were not willing to participate. Given that testimony, we cannot say that the court’s “reasonable efforts” finding was clearly erroneous. *See EBC Props., LLC v. Urge Food Corp.*, 257 Md.

App. 151, 165 (2023) (“If there is any competent and material evidence to support the factual findings of the trial court, those findings cannot be held to be clearly erroneous.” (cleaned up) (quoting *Carroll Indep. Fuel Co. v. Washington Real Est. Inv. Tr.*, 202 Md. App. 206, 224 (2011))).

**JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR BALTIMORE CITY AFFIRMED;
COSTS TO BE PAID BY APPELLANT.**