

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

NO. 2020-CA-00966-COA

TENISHA MONCHELLE BULLOCK

APPELLANT

v.

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CHILD
PROTECTION SERVICES AND JACKSON
COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILD
PROTECTION SERVICES**

APPELLEES

DATE OF JUDGMENT: 08/04/2020
TRIAL JUDGE: HON. SHARON WILLIS SIGALAS
COURT FROM WHICH APPEALED: JACKSON COUNTY YOUTH COURT
ATTORNEY FOR APPELLANT: MARCUS PITTMAN
ATTORNEY FOR APPELLEES: TONYA MICHELLE BLAIR
NATURE OF THE CASE: CIVIL - CUSTODY
DISPOSITION: AFFIRMED - 07/19/2022
MOTION FOR REHEARING FILED:
MANDATE ISSUED:

BEFORE CARLTON, P.J., LAWRENCE AND McCARTY, JJ.

LAWRENCE, J., FOR THE COURT:

¶1. Tenisha Bullock appeals from the Jackson County Youth Court's judgment terminating her parental rights to her four children. Specifically, she argues that (1) the youth court erred in finding that the Jackson County Department of Child Protection Services (CPS) presented clear and convincing evidence to support a termination of parental rights (TPR); and (2) the court-appointed guardian ad litem (GAL) failed to conduct a proper investigation. Finding no error, we affirm the youth court's judgment terminating Bullock's parental rights.

FACTS

¶2. At the time of this appeal, Bullock had four children—Lucy, born in 2011; Thomas, born in 2014; Jack, born in 2015; and William, born in 2016.¹ In January 2017, Bullock lived with Trevon Jones, Thomas’ legal father and Jack and William’s putative father. Lucy was enrolled in kindergarten at College Park Elementary School in Gautier, Mississippi. On January 18, 2017, Lucy went to see the school nurse, Christy Tingle. Lucy appeared to have a one-inch red mark on her right cheek, a half-inch red mark on her forehead, a two-inch red mark on her nose, and bluish red bruising and swelling around her left eyebrow and left eye. Lucy told Nurse Tingle that the night before, she was playing with her brothers in their room. Soon after, her mother’s boyfriend, Jones,² came in the room, “grabbed [her] by her hair,” “punched [her] in the face,” “crashed [her] to the floor on her head,” and then locked her outside. Nurse Tingle filed a report with CPS, which included a body diagram indicating the location of Lucy’s injuries as well as a written account of how Lucy allegedly sustained the injuries.

¶3. The next day, Lucy got off the bus wearing only one shoe. When Nurse Tingle asked Lucy why she had on only one shoe, Lucy said she got herself ready because her parents were sleeping. Nurse Tingle gave Lucy some new socks and shoes and noticed three abrasions on Lucy’s face, each about one centimeter in diameter. When Nurse Tingle asked Lucy what happened, Lucy said, “My daddy hit me in the face with a switch last night” because “he just wanted to.” Nurse Tingle filed another report with CPS.

¹ Pseudonyms are used to protect the children’s identities.

² Throughout the record, Lucy commonly refers to Jones as “La La” or “Daddy.”

¶4. On January 23, 2017, Nurse Tingle saw a two-inch scratch to the left side of Lucy's neck. Lucy told Nurse Tingle that Jones "had scratched [her] with his nails because he was mad at [her] because [she] was eating cornbread, collard greens and green beans, and he wanted to eat them." Nurse Tingle filed a third report with CPS in which she noted that she had already filed two previous reports.

¶5. On February 1, 2017, Lucy arrived at school with a half-inch laceration on the right side of her neck and a one-inch red mark surrounded by bluish bruising. Lucy told Nurse Tingle that Jones was mad at her for "play fighting" with her brothers, so "he hit [her] with [a] belt on [her] hand a bunch of times and then cut [her] with a knife." Lucy said her mother was asleep when Jones abused her, but she told her mother what happened the following morning. According to Lucy, her mother told her to tell the school nurse. Nurse Tingle filed a fourth report with CPS and included the dates she had filed her three previous reports. This was Nurse Tingle's last report for the school year.

¶6. School resumed on August 4, 2017, but Lucy was not present. Lucy eventually reported to the school on August 22, 2017. Jones walked her into school. While Lucy was walking to class, she complained to Nurse Tingle that her arm was hurting. Nurse Tingle examined Lucy and noticed a four-inch by three-inch welt or bruise to her upper-right arm. Lucy told Nurse Tingle that "my daddy hit me with a belt because I missed the bus this morning." Upon further examination, Nurse Tingle noticed Lucy also had a cut on the right corner of her mouth with dried blood on it, a one-and-a-half-inch by two-inch red welt or bruise on her left-inner forearm, a four-inch by three-inch welt on the back of her left

shoulder blade, and a three-inch (in diameter) welt or bruise on her left flank area. Lucy also had multiple old healing marks on her chest, stomach, and neck. Nurse Tingle filed a fifth report with CPS and referred back to her four previous filings. Following that fifth report, CPS caseworker Eleria Nettles came to the school to meet with Lucy, but CPS did not remove Lucy from the home.

¶7. On August 23, 2017, Lucy rode the afternoon bus home but was returned to school because no one was at the bus stop to get her. Nurse Tingle and Suzanne Ros, the school principal, took Lucy home and knocked on the door. Jones answered. According to Nurse Tingle, Jones “immediately started going for her[,]” and she pulled Lucy behind her. Nurse Tingle stated that Jones was “angry” because he claimed Lucy had seen him walking toward the bus to get her. Nurse Tingle called Nettles and told her she was worried for Lucy’s safety because she felt like Jones “could really hurt her.” Around 4:30 p.m. that day, Nettles went to Lucy’s home to check on her, but no one appeared to be home.

¶8. On August 30, 2017, Lucy got off the bus with a busted lip. When Nurse Tingle asked her what happened, Lucy said, “My daddy hit me with [a] switch because he was mad, but I don’t know why . . . my mama said she better not get anybody calling her or coming over to the house about this either.” Upon her examination, Nurse Tingle noticed a one-centimeter (in diameter) abrasion with a scab on Lucy’s left cheek, red bruising on her left thumb, and a half-inch laceration on the middle part of her lower lip. Nurse Tingle filed a sixth report and noted that Nettles was Lucy’s caseworker.

¶9. On September 5, 2017, Lucy did not show up for school. Nurse Tingle and Principal

Ros went to Lucy's home that morning to check on her. They knocked on the door, and Bullock answered. Bullock told Nurse Tingle and Principal Ros that Lucy had missed the bus but that she was almost ready. So Nurse Tingle and Principal Ros took Lucy to school. They both noticed that Lucy had a "strong odor." Lucy told them she had not had a bath since the week before. Nurse Tingle gave Lucy a towel, a washcloth, baby soap, and a set of new clothes. Lucy told Nurse Tingle that Jones "got mad at her this weekend because mom bought them cheese sticks for snacks and told me I could eat one. [Jones] came in and got mad . . . because I ate one and burned me with a lighter and hit me with a belt." Upon examination, Nurse Tingle noticed a blister on the palm of Lucy's right hand measuring one centimeter in diameter and a cluster of blisters on the top of her right hand. Nurse Tingle also noticed multiple red marks and bruises ranging from one to six inches in length on her right chest and shoulder area, as well as multiple cuts covering her back. Nurse Tingle called Nettles, Lucy's CPS caseworker, at 8 a.m. that morning, and Nettles arrived by 8:45 a.m. Nettles took photographs of Lucy's injuries and told Nurse Tingle not to put Lucy on the afternoon bus because she was going to obtain a court order allowing her to remove Lucy from the home.³ That same day, the Jackson County Youth Court entered four separate emergency custody orders for all four of Bullock's children. All four orders authorized CPS to remove each child from Bullock's home and transferred to CPS physical and legal custody of each child.

¶10. On September 7, 2017, the court held a shelter hearing for all four children and

³ Nettles took at least ten photographs of Lucy's injuries. These photographs were admitted into evidence during the TPR hearing.

ordered that CPS retain physical and legal custody. On September 8, 2017, CPS filed a petition alleging that Lucy was an abused child pursuant to Mississippi Code Annotated section 43-21-105(m) (Supp. 2017) and that her siblings were neglected children pursuant to section 43-21-105(l). CPS further alleged that Bullock, as their mother and the person legally responsible for all four children, allowed Lucy to suffer physical abuse, such as non-accidental burns, marks, and bruises. CPS maintained it was in all four children's best interests and welfare to be removed from the home.

¶11. On March 7, 2018, the youth court held an evidentiary hearing on CPS's petition and ultimately found that Lucy was an abused child and that her siblings were neglected children within the purview of the Mississippi Youth Court Act. Thus, the court held a disposition hearing on December 13, 2018. Afterward, the court issued a disposition order stating that Bullock had "subjected [Lucy] to aggravated circumstances including chronic abuse and torture[,] which also places her siblings in danger." Thus, the court entered an order bypassing reunification, finding that "[r]easonable efforts to maintain the child[ren] within [the] home [were] not . . . required." Miss. Code Ann. § 43-21-603(7)(c)(i) (Supp. 2016) (stating that reunification is not required when "[t]he parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances, including, but not limited to . . . torture [and] chronic abuse . . ."). That same day, the court also issued an order stating that a permanency plan of TPR or adoption was appropriate and in the best interest of each child. On October 3, 2019, the court appointed a GAL to protect the interests of the minor children. Thereafter, the court held regular permanency hearings on each child and continually held that terminating parental

rights and adoption were in the children’s best interests.

¶12. The youth court held a TPR hearing on July 21, 2020. Nurse Tingle testified in great detail about all seven reports she had filed with CPS regarding Lucy’s abuse. During her testimony, CPS introduced ten photographs taken of Lucy on September 5, 2017—the day she was removed from the home. The photographs documented injuries to Lucy’s lip, hands, chest, shoulder, and back. Nurse Tingle and Principal Ros both testified that they were concerned for Lucy’s safety the day they took her home and Jones answered the door because Jones appeared “angry” at Lucy. Principal Ros also testified that “there were a lot of days that [Lucy] came to school in the same clothes she wore the day before” and that “[o]ften her hair was not brushed.”

¶13. Jennifer Neher, Lucy’s social worker, testified that Lucy first came to see her in May 2018. At the time of the hearing, Neher had spent more than fifty hours with Lucy in their counseling sessions. Neher testified that Lucy was the “target child” or “scapegoat” for abuse in Bullock’s home. She explained that “when families are stressed . . . because of domestic violence [or] money . . . they tend to target one child.” Neher believed Lucy was targeted partly because her father was not in the home, and she was the eldest child. Neher testified that Lucy mainly struggled with anxiety that stemmed from post-traumatic stress disorder. Neher stated, “[Lucy] has a lot of trauma that she’s endured . . . [and] still having nightmares every now and then” According to Neher, Lucy reported that she was locked in a closet for punishments. When she was locked in the closet, Jones “would play Freddy Krueger music . . . and basically scare her.” Lucy also told Neher that “her mother

put her in a cold bathtub and smacked her in the face with a belt” for eating some chips. Neher testified that Lucy said her mother and Jones would sometimes order her to stand on one foot, and, when she put the foot down, they would “smack her with a belt.” Lucy also reported that her mother “spanked her with a high heel” and that she was “choked.” According to Lucy, Jones had a gun in the home, and he would hold the gun “and act like he was punching . . . or he was going to fight people.”

¶14. Neher specifically testified about Lucy’s relationship with her mother. Neher stated, “One of the things that has been probably the most talked about subject in the 51 hours, 51 sessions, that I’ve had with [Lucy] is that her mother was not able to protect her.” According to Neher, Lucy was afraid of her mother and did not want visitations with her because “she knows what she did.” When asked her opinion on whether Bullock should be “reintroduced” into Lucy’s life, Neher stated, “I think it would be detrimental to the child’s mental health and well-being” When asked about reunification, Neher stated, “I feel like the relationship has been . . . severed at this point. The child has done so well in the last two years having a stable, consistent environment [with her foster parents;] . . . she thrives.” Neher testified that she had seen “a big improvement” with Lucy since their first counseling session. Specifically, she stated, “[Lucy’s] outlook on things has become very positive. She has been able to control some of her emotions better[, and] . . . she enjoys school. She’s made a lot of progress.” Neher opined that it was in Lucy’s best interest to allow her foster parents to adopt her.

¶15. Eleria Nettles testified at the TPR hearing on behalf of CPS. Nettles testified that CPS

sought to terminate the parental rights of Bullock, Jones, Lucy’s father, and any unknown putative fathers.⁴ Nettles testified that CPS obtained custody of all four children on September 5, 2017, and that during the investigation, CPS requested to bypass reunification for all four children due to aggravated circumstances, namely chronic abuse and torture. At the time of the hearing, all four children were doing well with their foster parents, and all foster parents wanted to pursue adoption.⁵ Nettles’ impression of Jones was that he was “very aggressive” and “angry all the time.” Nettles testified that when CPS first obtained custody of the children, she had an “altercation” with Jones. She stated, “In the beginning of the case when we actually picked the kids up, he looked at me in a threatening way as an intent to threaten me. So I [filed] charges [against] him. I also caught him in the parking lot one day close to my car” Nettles also expressed concern that Bullock remained in a relationship with Jones after CPS obtained custody of the children. Nettles stated, “She never left him. They stayed together for a little while. And to me that was a concern that . . . [Jones] was more important than . . . her children.”

¶16. Daniel Dooley of the Child Advocacy Center testified to his videotaped forensic interview with Lucy from September 13, 2017. The video was entered into evidence without objection and played for the court. In the video, Lucy detailed more of the horrific abuse she

⁴ Richard Roper was the legal father listed on Lucy’s birth certificate. He signed a document voluntarily surrendering his rights on February 5, 2020. Lucy also had a putative father who did not submit to DNA testing. CPS sought to terminate his parental rights on the grounds of abandonment and desertion.

⁵ Lucy lived with a foster family, Thomas and Jack lived together with a different foster family, and William lived with another foster family.

endured at the hands of both Bullock and Jones. Some of that abuse included Jones taping her mouth shut and hitting her with a belt with his foot on her back. According to Lucy, her mother eventually took the tape off her mouth. In Dooley's notes from the interview he wrote, "When I asked about her mom [about the repeated instances of abuse], she said 'she didn't do nothing.'"

¶17. Bullock testified on her behalf. She stated that she and Jones got married in March 2017—two months after Nurse Tingle's first CPS report. Bullock testified that she divorced Jones six months later after she lost custody of the children. Bullock also claimed that Jones never lived with her during their six months of marriage. Bullock denied that Lucy went to school smelly and in dirty clothes. She also denied knowledge of Lucy's abuse and stated that she initially thought CPS came to her home because Lucy had "behavior problems." She claimed that "[Lucy] would bite herself." Finally, Bullock called herself a "great mom" and stated that she could "protect her kids."

¶18. The GAL testified to her independent investigation and evaluation of the case and ultimately recommended terminating parental rights for all four children. She stated,

I [have] kept up with the children [and] have attended every hearing; heard the forensics; had an opportunity to speak with the mother one on one. I know that [Bullock] came and, you know, we spent a good deal of time, myself and the court social worker . . . [speaking] with mom about the allegations.

The GAL testified that Lucy was "very afraid" of going back with her mother and that "it is very clear she wishes to be adopted." She continued, "[D]espite how [her] mom describes her as hurting herself and . . . having behavior problems, I've never seen anything from her other than kindness and gentleness." The GAL testified that she did not find Bullock's

testimony credible. The first time the GAL visited with Lucy, the child “showed [me] marks on her stomach where she said that the stepfather had pinched her” She testified that all the children had “excellent” relationships with their foster parents and that they all have “a very close, loving bond.” The GAL testified that she initiated the consideration of aggravating circumstances that ultimately resulted in the bypassing of reunification. When asked what led to her opinions, she responded, “Well, after listening to the forensic interview, it was clear that [Lucy] had been chronically abused and tortured.”

¶19. The GAL agreed with CPS that “[Bullock] was not mentally, morally[,] or otherwise fit to raise minor children.” She based her opinion in part on the fact that Bullock did not end her relationship with Jones during the abuse, and she did not protect Lucy or the other children who were witnessing the abuse. When asked about her opinion on reunification between Bullock and Lucy, the GAL testified that “it would send [Lucy] over the edge again. I think that she has spent this time getting as far as she has to be emotionally grounded again, and I really think . . . it would be a blow for her to relive that again”

¶20. At the close of the hearing, the court terminated parental rights for all four children. On August 4, 2020, the court entered an order terminating Bullock’s parental rights in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated sections 93-15-117(d)(i) (Rev. 2018), 93-15-119(1)(a)(i)-(ii) (Rev. 2018), and 93-15-121(f)-(g) (Rev. 2018). Bullock appealed.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

¶21. The burden of proof required to terminate parental rights is clear and convincing evidence. *See* Miss. Code Ann. § 93-15-115 (Rev. 2018). In reviewing a youth court’s

decision to terminate parental rights, we are limited by the clearly erroneous/manifest error standard of review. *In re G.Q.A. v. Harrison Cnty. Dept. of Hum. Servs.*, 771 So. 2d 331, 334-35 (¶14) (Miss. 2000); *see* Miss. Code Ann. § 93-15-115. This Court upholds a youth court’s decision “unless this Court finds it to be unsupported by substantial[] credible evidence, giving deference to the [youth court’s] findings of fact.” *In re G.Q.A.*, 771 So. 2d at 335 (¶14) (citing *S.C.R. v. F.W.K.*, 748 So. 2d 693, 700 (¶40) (Miss. 1999)).

ANALYSIS

1. Termination of Bullock’s Parental Rights

¶22. Bullock first argues that the youth court erred in finding that CPS had presented clear and convincing evidence to support a termination of her parental rights. As noted above, the youth court based its decision on multiple statutory grounds. Only one statutory ground is needed for termination of parental rights. *W.A.S. v. A.L.G.*, 949 So. 2d 31, 35 (¶11) (Miss. 2007). “Even where one of the grounds for termination is prove[d] by clear and convincing evidence, the trial court must still consider whether ‘termination is in the best interest[] of the child.’” *Brown v. Panola Cnty. Dep’t of Hum. Servs.*, 90 So. 3d 662, 665 (¶11) (Miss. Ct. App. 2012) (quoting *S.R.B.R. v. Harrison Cnty. Dep’t of Hum. Servs.*, 798 So. 2d 437, 443 (¶24) (Miss. 2001)).

¶23. In the present case, the youth court terminated Bullock’s parental rights in accordance with three separate TPR statutes—Mississippi Code Annotated sections 93-15-117(d)(i); 93-15-119(1)(a)(i)-(ii); and 93-15-121(f)-(g) (Rev. 2018). Mississippi Code Annotated section 93-15-117(d)(i) states:

When reasonable efforts for reunification are not required, a court hearing a petition under this chapter may terminate the parental rights of a parent if, after conducting an evidentiary hearing, the court finds by clear and convincing evidence

(d) That termination of the parent’s parental rights is appropriate because reunification between the parent and child is not desirable toward obtaining a satisfactory permanency outcome based on one or more of the following grounds:

(i) The basis for bypassing the reasonable efforts for reunification of the parent and child under Section 43-21-603(7)(c) is established by clear and convincing evidence

Specifically, the court found that CPS presented clear and convincing evidence that Bullock had subjected Lucy “to aggravated circumstances, including, but not limited to . . . torture [and] chronic abuse” *See* Miss. Code Ann. § 43-21-603(7)(c)(i).

¶24. Mississippi Code Annotated section 93-15-119(1)(a)(i)-(ii) provides:

(1) A court hearing a petition under this chapter may terminate the parental rights of a parent when, after conducting an evidentiary hearing, the court finds by clear and convincing evidence:

(a)(i) That the parent . . . is mentally, morally, or otherwise unfit to raise the child, which shall be established by showing past or present conduct of the parent that demonstrates a substantial risk of compromising or endangering the child’s safety and welfare; and

(ii) That termination of the parent’s parental rights is appropriate because reunification between the parent and child is not desirable toward obtaining a satisfactory permanency outcome

Here, the youth court found that Bullock was mentally, morally, or otherwise unfit to raise all four children.

¶25. The youth court also found that termination grounds existed based on the following factors in Mississippi Code Annotated section 93-15-121(f)-(g):

(f) The parent’s abusive or neglectful conduct has caused, at least in part, an extreme and deep-seated antipathy by the child toward the parent, or some other substantial erosion of the relationship between the parent and the child;

(g) The parent has committed an abusive act for which reasonable efforts to maintain the children in the home would not be required under Section 43-21-603, or a series of physically, mentally, or emotionally abusive incidents, against the child or another child, whether related by consanguinity or affinity or not, making future contacts between the parent and child undesirable

¶26. The record is replete with evidence that Bullock abused Lucy and allowed Jones to abuse Lucy. Nurse Tingle filed seven different reports with CPS documenting Lucy’s abuse. The CPS reports revealed that Jones “punched” Lucy, “crashed” her head to the floor, “scratched” her, “hit” her in the face with a switch, “hit” her with a belt,” “cut” her with a knife, and “burned” her with a lighter. Nurse Tingle’s fourth CPS report confirmed that Bullock was at the very least aware of the time Jones hit Lucy with a belt and cut her with a knife. Nurse Tingle’s fifth CPS report stated that when Lucy came to school with a busted lip (from where Jones hit her in the mouth with a switch), she told Nurse Tingle, “[M]y mama said she better not get anybody calling her or coming over to the house about this either.” CPS introduced ten photographs documenting Lucy’s physical abuse, including Lucy’s busted lip.

¶27. Neher, Lucy’s social worker, testified at length about the physical, emotional, and mental trauma Lucy experienced at the hands of both Bullock and Jones. Neher testified about how Bullock condoned and participated in the abuse, including “spanking” Lucy with a high heel. Lucy also told Neher that “her mother put her in a cold bathtub and smacked her in the face with a belt” for eating some chips. Lucy also said she was “choked” and locked

in a closet for punishments. Lucy specifically told Neher that her mother “knows what she did” and that she did not “protect” her. Neher even stated that Lucy was “afraid” of her mother. Notably, Neher strongly urged against reunifying Lucy with Bullock because Neher felt the relationship was “severed.” The GAL testified similarly, stating that Lucy was “very afraid” of her mother and that reunification “would send [Lucy] over the edge again.” The GAL further testified that it was her recommendation to bypass reunification and terminate Bullock’s parental rights. The youth court ultimately agreed with the GAL’s recommendation and found that it was in all the children’s best interest to bypass reunification and terminate Bullock’s parental rights on the grounds listed in ¶¶ 23-25.

¶28. The Mississippi Supreme Court has held that “[p]arental rights may be terminated if a parent has been responsible for a series of abusive incidents towards a child.” *G.Q.A.*, 771 So. 2d at 335 (¶17). In that case, the supreme court upheld the family court’s order terminating parental rights when there had been three incidents of abuse of a baby in her parents’ home, including a burn, withholding medical treatment, and malnutrition. *Id.* at (¶18). Specifically, the supreme court stated, “Keeping in mind the constitutional mandate supporting parental rights, we find substantial credible evidence that indicates the natural parents were responsible for a series of abusive incidents against [the child]” and that the parents “will not be . . . allowed an opportunity to abuse this child again.” *Id.* at 336 (¶23). Similarly here, there was substantial credible evidence showing that both Bullock and Jones were responsible for a series of events that warranted termination of their parental rights.

¶29. Bullock also argues that CPS presented no evidence that Lucy’s siblings were abused

or neglected. It is important to note that Bullock never appealed the youth court's adjudication of neglect as to Lucy's siblings or any of the disposition orders. Thus, this Court has no jurisdiction over any issues stemming from the adjudication order. *In re M.M.*, 319 So. 3d 1188, 1191 (¶2) (Miss. Ct. App. 2021). In any event, "[a] court may find that if one child is abused, the child's siblings are neglected. The basis is that a sibling has been harmed, and the potential harm to the other child is sufficient to warrant both children being removed from the harmful environment." *T.T. v. Harrison Cnty. Dep't of Hum. Servs.*, 90 So. 3d 1283, 1287 (¶19) (Miss. Ct. App. 2012) (citation omitted) (quoting *S.C. v. State*, 795 So. 2d 526, 532 (¶27) (Miss. 2001)). Further, this Court has held that the abuse of one child is sufficient to terminate parental rights as to the child's siblings. *H.D.H. v. Prentiss Cnty. Dep't of Hum. Servs. ex rel. Malone*, 979 So. 2d 6, 12 (¶17) (Miss. Ct. App. 2008). Accordingly, we find no merit to Bullock's argument.

¶30. After review, we find that there is substantial credible evidence in the record to support the youth court's decision to terminate Bullock's parental rights and to support its finding that this decision was in the best interest of all four children. Accordingly, we affirm the youth court's judgment.

2. GAL Investigation

¶31. Bullock also argues that the GAL failed to conduct a fair and unbiased investigation because "she did not contact or attempt to contact [Bullock or] the other parents." She claims that the court should have "required" the GAL to interview Bullock in regard to the TPR hearing before making a recommendation.

¶32. In *R.F. v. Lowndes County Department of Human Services*, 17 So. 3d 1133, 1134 (¶1) (Miss. Ct. App. 2009), a mother similarly argued that “the county court erred in finding that there was no requirement that the guardian ad litem meet with her” before terminating her parental rights. This Court reiterated that GALs are not required to contact or interview the natural mother in TPR cases. *Id.* at 1139 (¶20). Rather, there are instances where “some contact **may** be appropriate.” *Id.* (citing *M.J.S.H.S. v. Yalobusha Cnty. Dep’t of Hum. Services*, 782 So. 2d 737, 741 (¶17) (Miss. 2001)). This Court further noted that the GAL had attempted to contact the natural mother and also had interviewed the child, the child’s foster parents, and the Lowndes County Department of Human Services’ social workers. *Id.* at (¶21).

¶33. Here, the GAL testified that although she did not interview Bullock as part of the TPR hearing, she “had an opportunity to speak with the mother one on one” and “spent a good deal of time” talking to Bullock about the allegations before the TPR proceedings. The GAL also testified that she had visited with all the children, attended and participated in all the youth court hearings, and watched the videotaped forensic interview. Upon review of the record, we find no evidence to support Bullock’s claim that the GAL was unfair or biased in her investigation. Thus, we find no merit in this issue.

CONCLUSION

¶34. This Court finds that there is substantial credible evidence in the record to support the youth court’s judgment terminating Bullock’s parental rights. Further, we find no merit in Bullock’s claim that the GAL conducted an unfair or biased investigation. Accordingly, we

affirm the youth court's judgment.

¶35. **AFFIRMED.**

**BARNES, C.J., CARLTON AND WILSON, P.JJ., GREENLEE,
WESTBROOKS, McDONALD, McCARTY, SMITH AND EMFINGER, JJ.,
CONCUR.**