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IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT

K.B.,

Petitioner,

v.

THE SUPERIOR COURT OF MADERA COUNTY,

Respondent;

MADERA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES,

Real Party in Interest.

F090774

(Super. Ct. Nos. MJP018588, MJP018590, MJP019106)

OPINION

THE COURT[*]

ORIGINAL PROCEEDINGS; petition for extraordinary writ review. Timothy A. Kams, Judge. (Retired judge of the Madera Co. Super. Ct. assigned by the Chief Justice pursuant to art. VI, § 6 of the Cal. Const.)

K.B., in propria persona, for Petitioner.

No appearance for Respondent.

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[*] Before Levy, A.P.J., Peña, J. and Snauffer, J.

Regina A. Garza, County Counsel, and Christopher B. Dorian and Doreen S. Houx, Deputies County Counsel, for Real Party in Interest.

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K.B. (mother), in propria persona, seeks an extraordinary writ (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 8.452)[1] from the juvenile court's orders issued at a contested 18-month review hearing (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 366.22)[2] terminating her reunification services and setting a section 366.26 hearing for March 16, 2026, as to her children B.B., L.D., and E.D. (collectively, the children). Mother's trial counsel informed this court that there were no meritorious issues found to proceed on a petition for extraordinary writ. Mother's petition requests a temporary stay of the section 366.26 hearing for additional services to be provided. We conclude mother's petition fails to comport with the procedural requirements of rule 8.452 regarding extraordinary writ petitions and dismiss the petition.

PROCEDURAL AND FACTUAL SUMMARY

In March 2024, the Madera County Department of Social Services (department) filed an original petition alleging the children were described by section 300, subdivisions (a) and (b)(1). The petition alleged the children were at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm inflicted nonaccidentally by mother. The petition further alleged mother's mental illness and ongoing domestic violence in the home posed a risk to the children. On March 18, 2024, the juvenile court ordered the children detained, and it set a jurisdiction hearing for March 28, 2024.

The department's jurisdiction report recommended that the allegations in the petition be found true. The allegations in the petition were found true on April 29, 2024, and a disposition hearing was set for May 16, 2024. The disposition report recommended

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1 All further rule references are to the California Rules of Court.

2 All further statutory references are to the Welfare and Institutions Code.

that the children remain in out-of-home care and family reunification services be provided to mother. Family reunification services were also recommended for Jose D., the father of L.D. and E.D.

At a contested disposition hearing held on May 20, 2024, the children were removed from mother's custody, and family reunification services were ordered for mother and Jose. As part of her case plan, mother was ordered to participate in mental health services and domestic violence education. Supervised visitation was ordered between mother and the children at twice per week for two hours, and a six-month review hearing was set for November 4, 2024.

At a continued six-month review hearing held on April 17, 2025, the juvenile court continued family reunification services and set an 18-month review hearing for September 4, 2025. The department's report for the 18-month review hearing, dated September 25, 2025, recommended termination of mother and Jose's family reunification services.

B.B. at nine years of age, was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). He was developing at an age appropriate level, and he did not meet the criteria for Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC) services. B.B. attended mental health services twice per month, but he was not making progress in addressing his behaviors. Behavioral services were provided in his placement for six months, but his behaviors continued to worsen.

L.D., at six years of age, was described as "very intelligent," but he exhibited emotional dysregulation. "WRAP" or wraparound services were provided to L.D. once per week, and a wraparound team met two to three times per week.[3] L.D. previously

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[3] "[T]he Wraparound service program … provide[s] 'family-based service alternatives to group home care using intensive, individualized services ….' The target population for the program is children in or at risk of placement in group homes …." (*In re W.B.* (2012) 55 Cal.4th 30, 41, fn. 2; see § 1850 et seq.)

participated in behavioral services, but he graduated from the program in February 2025. The department submitted a referral for wraparound services in March 2025, and L.D. was accepted for services in May 2025. The social worker maintained regular contact with the wraparound service provider, and the services were provided in L.D.'s placement.

E.D., at three years of age, had slight speech delays, and the results of a psychological evaluation with CVRC were still pending. E.D. did not meet the criteria for mental health services, but there were reports of behavioral concerns.

Mother completed a parenting education course, anger management, and a domestic violence program. She attended her supervised visits with the children regularly, but she struggled with their behavioral and developmental challenges. Supervising staff reported visitation was chaotic and the children did not listen to mother or Jose. The department's assessment indicated mother struggled to utilize the knowledge and skills from her services to engage with and discipline the children appropriately.

A psychiatric evaluation determined mother met the criteria for a diagnosis of major depressive disorder, recurrent episode moderate. Appropriate treatment for her conditions included individual and group counseling, psychotropic medication, and case management services. At the time of the report, mother was participating in mental health services and taking prescribed psychotropic medication, but there were minimal changes to her behavior and temperament.

A contested 18-month review hearing began on October 20, 2025. Mother was present and represented by counsel. The department's counsel submitted on its reports and presented argument in support of the recommendation to terminate family reunification services.

Mother's counsel proceeded on the department's reports without offering any additional evidence. Her counsel requested the juvenile court exercise its discretion to

continue reunification services based on a finding that mother made reasonable efforts to comply with the case plan despite mother's failure to resolve all of the conditions that led to the children's removal before the 18-month deadline. Mother's counsel also argued that unreasonable delays in providing wraparound services and in-home behavioral services allowed the court to order continued reunification services.

After hearing argument from counsel, the juvenile court continued the contested hearing for a ruling. On November 17, 2025, the court followed the department's recommendation to terminate reunification services after finding that the department had provided reasonable services and mother made minimal progress toward alleviating the causes necessitating the children's out-of-home placement. A section 366.26 hearing was set for March 16, 2026.

DISCUSSION

As a general proposition, a juvenile court's rulings are presumed correct. (*Denham v. Superior Court* (1970) 2 Cal.3d 557, 564.) A parent seeking review of the court's orders from the setting hearing must file an extraordinary writ petition in this court on Judicial Council form JV–825 to initiate writ proceedings. The purpose of such petitions is to allow the appellate court to achieve a substantive and meritorious review of the court's findings and orders issued at the setting hearing in advance of the section 366.26 hearing. (§ 366.26, subd. (*l*)(4).)

Rule 8.452 sets forth the content requirements for an extraordinary writ petition. It requires the petitioner to set forth legal arguments with citation to the appellate record. (Rule 8.452(b).) In keeping with the dictate of rule 8.452(a)(1), we liberally construe writ petitions in favor of their adequacy recognizing that a parent representing him or herself is not trained in the law. Nevertheless, the petitioner must at least articulate a claim of error and support it by citations to the record. Failure to do so renders the petition inadequate in its content and we are not required to independently review the record for possible error. (*In re Sade C.* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 952, 994.)

Here, mother's petition is inadequate in presenting a claim of error. She indicated on page 2 of the preprinted "Petition for Extraordinary Writ" form (JV-825) that the juvenile court's order was erroneous on the grounds that reasonable services were not provided. However, mother did not provide any context from which this court could construe an alleged error by citing to relevant facts in the appellate record or any legal authority. Nowhere in the petition does mother describe how the services provided to her were not reasonable. Nor does she argue that there was not substantial evidence supporting the court's reasonable services finding.

A party's "conclusory presentation, without pertinent argument or an attempt to apply the law to the circumstances of this case, is inadequate," and the contention will be found by the appellate court to have been abandoned. (*Benach v. County of Los Angeles* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 836, 852.) Without citation to authority or to the record, or any discussion supporting her conclusory statements, any challenge to the juvenile court's finding that reasonable services were provided by the department must be deemed abandoned. (See *Dills v. Redwoods Associates, Ltd.* (1994) 28 Cal.App.4th 888, 890, fn. 1 [appellate court has no obligation to "develop the appellants' arguments for them"].) Consequently, mother failed to raise a claim of reversible error. Therefore, her petition does not comply with rules 8.450 through 8.452 and is inadequate for appellate review.

Even if we were to construe mother's petition as a challenge to the juvenile court's finding that reasonable services were provided, her claim lacks merit. By the time a dependency case reaches the 18-month status review hearing, the court has few options. The court must either return the child to parental custody or set a section 366.26 hearing to select a permanent plan. If the court finds it would be detrimental to return the child, it must set a hearing under section 366.26 to select a permanent plan. (§ 366.22, subd. (a)(3).) Section 366.22, subdivision (b), however, allows the court to continue reunification services beyond 18 months under exceptional circumstances. Another possible exception that would allow the court to continue reunification services beyond

the 18-month review hearing is when the court finds the parent was not provided reasonable reunification services. (*In re M.F.* (2019) 32 Cal.App.5th 1, 21.) We review the court's finding that reunification services were reasonable for substantial evidence, resolving all conflicts in favor of the court, and indulging in all legitimate inferences to uphold the court's ruling. (*In re Alvin R.* (2003) 108 Cal.App.4th 962, 971.)

The services set forth in mother's case plan were mental health services and domestic violence education. The department ensured mother was provided each of these services during the reunification period, and she completed a parenting education course, anger management, and a domestic violence program. Reunification is a collaborative effort and a parent is presumed capable of complying with a reasonable case plan. (*In re Christina L.* (1992) 3 Cal.App.4th 404, 415.) The parent is responsible for communicating with the department and participating in the reunification process. (*In re Raymond R.* (1994) 26 Cal.App.4th 436, 441.) If mother felt during the reunification period that her services or visitation were inadequate, she " 'had the assistance of counsel to seek guidance from the juvenile court in formulating a better plan.' " (*Christina L.*, at p. 416.) Thus, mother has failed to show the department's implementation of her case plan and efforts to assist her in complying with it were unreasonable.

Based upon the record before us, we would conclude substantial evidence supports the juvenile court's findings and orders. However, we dismiss mother's writ petition because it fails to comport with rule 8.452.

DISPOSITION

The petition for extraordinary writ is dismissed. The request for a stay of the section 366.26 hearing is denied. This court's opinion is final forthwith as to this court pursuant to rule 8.490(b)(2)(A).