

IN RE CHILD OF DEAN L.

Submitted on Briefs December 28, 2022

Decided January 5, 2023

Panel: STANFILL, C.J., and MEAD, JABAR, HORTON, and CONNORS, JJ.

MEMORANDUM OF DECISION

Dean L. appeals from a judgment of the District Court (Skowhegan, *Nale, J.*) terminating his parental rights to his child.¹ *See* 22 M.R.S. § 4055(1)(A)(1)(a), (B)(2)(a), (b)(i)-(ii), (iv) (2022). The father asserts his due process rights were violated when the termination hearing was held via Zoom rather than in person, thus depriving him of his right to confidentially communicate with counsel. We have reviewed the record and conclude the court did not err in conducting the hearing, where it carefully protected the father's right to counsel. *See In re Adden B.*, 2016 ME 113, ¶ 7, 144 A.3d 1158. The father did not object to the hearing being held via Zoom and the father and his counsel were provided the opportunity to confidentially communicate when requested.

We further conclude that the court did not clearly err in its findings of unfitness, nor did it abuse its discretion in determining that termination of the father's parental rights is in the child's best interest. *See In re Olivia F.*, 2019 ME 149, ¶ 5, 217 A.3d 1106; *In re Children of Jason C.*, 2020 ME 86, ¶ 7, 236 A.3d 438.

¹ The mother did not appear at the termination hearing and does not appeal the court's termination of her parental rights.

The entry is:

Judgment affirmed.

Brittany Sawyer, Esq., Holmes Legal Group, LLC, Wells, for appellant Dean L.

Aaron M. Frey, Attorney General, and Hunter C. Umphrey, Asst. Atty. Gen., Office of the Attorney General, Bangor, for appellee Department of Health and Human Services

Skowhegan District Court docket number PC-2020-73
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