2025 IL App (1st) 250125-U
No. 1-25-0125
Order filed November 26, 2025

Sixth Division

IN THE

APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS

FIRST DISTRICT

In re THE INTEREST OF A.S., Minor.	)	Appeal from the
	)	Circuit Court of
(THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS,	)	Cook County.
	)	
Respondent-Appellee,	)	No. 21 JA 00760
	)	
v.	)	Honorable
	)	Lisa Taylor,
A.B.,	)	Judge, presiding.
	)	
Respondent-Appellant).	)	

JUSTICE HYMAN delivered the judgment of the court.
Justices Pucinski and Gamrath concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held*: Trial court's findings that father of minor child was unfit and that it was in child's best interest to terminate parental rights were not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 2 The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services removed A.S. from his parents' care shortly after he was born three years ago and placed him with a foster parent. His mother had four other children already in DCFS custody, and intact services had long failed. A.B., A.S.'s father, was referred for services but did not complete them. A background check showed A.B. had several criminal charges and allegedly, a kidnapping conviction. Caseworkers were

also troubled that A.B. drove A.S. without a valid driver's license and allowed the mother unsupervised visits. A.B. denies he was ever convicted of kidnapping; regardless, supervised visits were resumed, but A.B. rarely attended and last saw A.S. in May 2023.

¶ 3 Three months after A.B. stopped visiting, the permanency goal changed from return home within 12 months to termination of parental rights. After a fitness hearing, the trial court found A.B. unfit under sections 1(D)(b), (c), and (m) of the Adoption Act (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b), (c), and (m) (West 2024)). At the best interest stage, the trial court determined that A.S. needed permanence and stability and ordered termination of parental rights and the appointment of a guardian with the right to consent to adoption.

¶ 4 A.B. argues these findings were against the manifest weight of the evidence. He concedes his inconsistent attendance and incomplete services but insists he did what he could. He blames DCFS for wrongly assuming he had a kidnapping conviction and for not making sufficient efforts to locate him after unsupervised visits ended.

¶ 5 The record, however, tells a different story. The findings of unfitness and the best interest determination were sound.

¶ 6 While we affirm, the record shows that A.B.'s interactions with A.S. were loving and appropriate when they occurred, and the foster parent has expressed a sincere willingness to support continued contact. We are hopeful that A.B. will take advantage of this opportunity to remain an encouraging presence in A.S.'s life, contributing positively to his son as he matures in a world that, in different ways, tests everyone.

¶ 7 Background

¶ 8 A.S. was born to C.S., his mother, and A.B., his father, the appellant. Five days later, the State filed a petition for adjudication of wardship and motion for temporary custody, alleging

he was abused and neglected. The petition noted that A.S.'s mother already had four children in DCFS temporary custody and had a prior indicated report for testing positive for controlled substances. (A.S.'s case was consolidated with the cases of two of his siblings until this court unconsolidated them. Neither C.S. nor her other four children is a party to this appeal.)

¶ 9 According to the petition, DCFS opened an intact family case in March 2019, but by the following year, she had not engaged in reunification services. The petition alleged C.S. tested positive for controlled substances, was involved in a domestic dispute involving a knife when her children were present, and had left her children with a security guard at a bus terminal for several hours before returning intoxicated. Although C.S. was released from incarceration in May 2021, she still had not begun several reunification services for her older children.

¶ 10 After a hearing, the trial court took temporary custody of newborn A.S. and granted A.B., whose paternity was later confirmed, supervised day visits.

¶ 11 In September 2021, the trial court granted DCFS discretion to allow A.B. unsupervised visits and ordered the agency to conduct a child endangerment risk assessment protocol (CERAP) of his home and assess him for placement.

¶ 12 A.B. participated in an integrated assessment (I.A.). The assessment showed he had five criminal convictions, recent arrests, and no stable housing of his own. A.B. expressed willingness to engage in services but struggled to remember appointments. After he failed to attend to parenting classes, the agency re-referred him. The I.A. recommended A.B. participate in domestic violence counseling, parenting classes, and a parenting capacity assessment.

¶ 13 In June 2022, the court adjudicated A.S. neglected based on C.S.'s conduct and A.B's noncustodial status. At the disposition hearing, the court found both parents unable to care for A.S. and placed him under DCFS guardianship in a non-relative foster home. A.B. was allowed

three weekly visits. The court set a permanency goal of return home within 12 months, stating, "Parents need to continue to make progress in their services." The court continued that goal after an April 28, 2023, permanency hearing, noting that A.B. made "some efforts" but not substantial progress.

¶ 14 Three months later, however, the court's goal changed to substitute care pending court termination of parental rights. The State filed a supplemental petition alleging A.B. was unfit for (i) failing to maintain reasonable interest, (ii) deserting A.S. for more than three months, and (iii) failing to make reasonable progress during three separate nine-month periods, beginning on June 30, 2022.

¶ 15 Unfitness Hearing

¶ 16 The trial court held an unfitness hearing via Zoom on November 1, 2024. Four witnesses testified, and the parties admitted numerous exhibits, including DCFS service plans, court reports, and other documents, and A.B.'s integrated assessment.

¶ 17 The State's first witness, the former Director of Child Welfare Services at Unity Parenting and Counseling, Nicela Guy, testified that A.B. was twice referred for parenting classes and for individual therapy, but he did not complete either. A domestic violence clinical assessment after an altercation with A.S.'s mother remained outstanding when Guy left. Although allowed three supervised visits a week, A.B. attended about 20%. When he did attend, the agency had no concerns about his interactions, and unsupervised day visits were briefly permitted, then revoked due to concerns about A.B. transporting A.S. without a valid driver's license, the visit location, his inconsistent attendance, and his allowing C.S. to be present. After supervised visits resumed, he attended roughly 10% of them and never sent A.S. cards, gifts, or letters.

¶ 18 Caseworker Kimberly Garrett testified that she did a background check and was concerned about several criminal charges and a kidnapping conviction. Garrett also learned that A.B. was allowing C.S. to attend his visits with A.S. After unsupervised visits were suspended, A.B. did not participate in visits with A.S.

¶ 19 At a virtual court session in May 2023, Garrett spoke with A.B. in a breakout room to discuss supervised visits and to get his address so she could do a safety assessment of his home, but he refused to give his address. Garrett said A.B. wanted unsupervised visits because he did not think he was a danger. She said she called him frequently, but he would not cooperate.

¶ 20 During her five months as caseworker, A.B. attended four or five visits with A.S. Once A.B. stopped attending visits, she had no contact with him. A.B. did not send cards, gifts, or letters, though he had been providing gifts before the agency suspended unsupervised visits. Court reports admitted into evidence stated that A.B. was not involved in services and that visitation was unsuccessful because he was not attending consistently. The agency recommended that A.S.'s goal change to substitute care pending termination of parental rights.

¶ 21 On cross-examination, Garrett agreed A.B. was cooperative until the background check. "Once we did the background check, and it was determined that he needed to do some services, he kind of shut down. I would call him, and he would visit, but once it was determined that we needed to do a CERAP on his home and find out who these other children that allegedly were living in his home was, he shut down."

¶ 22 DCFS public service administrator Clara Henderson-Smith testified that she was the supervisor on A.S.'s case after it was transferred to her agency in 2024. At that time, A.B. did not engage in reunification services. Henderson-Smith reviewed the file and, despite a due

diligence search, could not find a phone number or address for A.B. She said A.B. had no visits with A.S. after the case was transferred to DCFS.

¶ 23 A.B. testified, denying he was ever charged with kidnapping. When the caseworker brought it up to him in May 2023, he told her they had the wrong person. Early in the case, he visited A.S. twice weekly and brought toys, clothes, and food. A.S. was a baby, he would feed him a bottle and change his diaper. He acknowledged he never completed therapy or parenting classes, last visited A.S. in May 2023, and did not give DCFS his updated address after moving at the end of 2023 because the agency never asked him for it.

¶ 24 A.B. acknowledged he was incarcerated for about two months in Indiana on resisting arrest charges. After his release, he contacted Unity and then DCFS about the case.

¶ 25 Service Plans

¶ 26 Several service plans were admitted into evidence. The April 2023 service plan rated A.B. unsatisfactory across all services. Although he had begun individual therapy, he stopped attending, and the caseworker had no contact with him or evidence that he was engaged in services. A.B. was inconsistent with visits, regularly not showing up, cancelling, or failing to confirm for weeks at a time. Meanwhile, A.S. became attached to his caregiver.

¶ 27 An October 2023 service plan reported that A.B.'s whereabouts were unknown. He again received unsatisfactory ratings for services and visitation, and the agency recommended changing the goal to termination of parental rights, citing C.S.'s incarceration and A.B.'s lack of engagement. As of the April 2024 service plan, A.B.'s whereabouts remained unknown, and he was inconsistent with services and visits.

¶ 28 Closing Arguments

¶ 29 The State argued A.B. was unfit under grounds (b) and (m) for the alleged nine-month periods. (The State also requested unfitness under (n), a ground it had not pled, rather than (c), which it had.) The State emphasized the testimony and documents showing A.B. never completed therapy or parenting services and had not visited A.S. since May 2023. The State also noted that no evidence, other than his own statement, showed A.B. was prevented from visiting A.S., which conflicted with Garrett's testimony that he refused to cooperate with the agency after she completed his background check.

¶ 30 A.B. argued that more than 10 caseworkers and supervisors who had handled the case caused confusion and delayed progress. He challenged the credibility of the State's witnesses and claimed he lost unsupervised visits because the agency mistakenly believed he had a kidnapping conviction.

¶ 31 In rebuttal, the State argued that the kidnapping conviction was not the sole reason unsupervised visits ended. Caseworkers had concerns about A.B.'s driving A.S. without a license, his refusal to provide a home address, and photos of C.S. present during unsupervised visits.

¶ 32 Trial Court's Ruling

¶ 33 The trial court found the State's witnesses credible and that A.B. credibly testified that his last visit with A.S. was in May 2023. The court acknowledged that caseworker turnover was an issue, but A.B. testified that he did not give his address. After weighing the testimony and documentary evidence, the court found that the strongest basis for unfitness was ground (b), but the evidence also supported unfitness under (m) and (n). (The State asserts the reference to (n) was a scrivener's error because its petition alleged grounds (b), (c), and (m).)

¶ 34 Best Interest Hearing

¶ 35 At the best interest hearing, DCFS child welfare specialist Jazmine Williams, A.S.'s foster parent, and A.B. testified. The court admitted an October 2024 service plan and a termination report. The plan stated that A.S. was safe, thriving, and deeply attached to his caregiver. A November 2024 report noted that A.B.'s whereabouts were unknown until he appeared at the DCFS office on October 22, 2024, stating he had just been released from prison and asked about visits. DCFS scheduled three supervised visits for A.B., but he did not attend any of them. DCFS recommended changing the goal to adoption.

¶ 36 Williams testified she was assigned to A.S.'s case beginning in September 2024. She said that shortly after birth, A.S., now three years old, was placed with, S.G., a foster mother, and her adopted son and a foster daughter. His October 2023 developmental evaluation indicated he was doing well developmentally. Williams visited the foster home monthly and found it to be safe and appropriate. She has seen A.S. interact with S.G., whom he calls "mommy," and they have a loving and caring relationship. A.S. attends preschool regularly, and S.G. ensures he has medical and dental appointments. Williams said the agency believes termination of parental rights was in A.S.'s best interest. Williams spoke to A.B. shortly before the unfitness hearing, and he told her he had recently been released from prison and did not want his parental rights terminated. Both Williams and the foster parent reported that A.S. never asks about A.B.

¶ 37 Foster parent, S.G., testified that A.S. started preschool in October 2024 and is doing well. He gets along with her adopted son and foster daughter. A.S. is mature for his age, and she has no concerns about his development. She takes him swimming, to Chuck-E-Cheese, trampolining, and to church. S.G. wants to adopt A.S. and cannot imagine her life without him. She will maintain contact with his four older siblings and has seen A.S. interact with A.B. and believes he loves his father. She would continue A.S.'s communication with A.B.

¶ 38 A.B. testified that he loves and misses his son, wants visits, and believes he is not unfit, stating he has six other children that he has custody of from time to time. He felt he was being punished for circumstances he could not control, though he acknowledged that he "did slip up" with the "classes [he] was supposed to be taking."

¶ 39 After arguments, the trial court took judicial notice of the unfitness findings and ruled that A.S.'s best interest was termination of A.B.'s parental rights with the permanency goal of adoption. The court found Williams "extremely credible," and A.B. credible and commended him for his honesty about the need to correct the conditions that resulted in A.S. being placed in care. The court encouraged A.B. to maintain a relationship with A.S., noting the foster parent's support of it. The written order found A.B. was unfit under grounds (b), (c), and (m).

¶ 40 Analysis

¶ 41 A.B. argues that the unfitness finding was against the manifest weight of the evidence. He also claims that the court's determination that terminating his parental rights was in A.S.'s best interests is erroneous. He asks that we reverse the trial court and reinstate his parental rights. The State does not address ground (c), so we will only consider grounds (b) and (m).

¶ 42 The Juvenile Court Act of 1987 (705 ILCS 405/1-1 *et seq*. (West 2024)) establishes a two-step process for the involuntary termination of parental rights. *In re Joshua K.*, 405 Ill. App. 3d 569, 580 (2010). First, the State must prove by clear and convincing evidence that the parent is unfit as defined in section 1(D) of the Adoption Act. 750 ILCS 50/1(D) (West 2024); *In re C.W.*, 199 Ill. 2d 198, 210 (2002). Only if the court finds the parent unfit will it then consider whether terminating parental rights is in the child's best interest and appoint a guardian with the right to consent to the child's adoption. 705 ILCS 405/2-29(2) (West 2024); *C.W.*, 199 Ill. 2d at 210. Because the trial court is in the best position to assess the credibility of witnesses, a

reviewing court may overturn a trial court's finding of unfitness only where it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re C.N.*, 196 Ill. 2d 181, 208 (2001). That requires a clearly apparent opposite conclusion, or the court's findings were unreasonable, arbitrary, and not based on the evidence. *In re Tasha L.-I.*, 383 Ill. App. 3d 45, 52 (2008). Each case concerning parental fitness is unique and must be decided on the specific facts and circumstances presented. *In re Gwynne P.*, 215 Ill. 2d 340, 354 (2005).

¶ 43 The reviewing court only needs to affirm one ground of unfitness to affirm termination of parental rights. *In re Je. A.*, 2019 IL App (1st) 190467, ¶ 47. Because the grounds for unfitness are independent, evidence supporting any one of the alleged statutory grounds is sufficient to uphold a finding of unfitness. *In re M.W.*, 2019 IL App (1st) 191002, ¶ 56. Our role is to review the trial court's decision rather than its reasoning, and we may affirm on any basis in the record, regardless of whether the trial court relied on that basis or its reasoning was correct. *In re Zoey L.*, 2021 IL App (1st) 210063, ¶ 34.

¶ 44 Unfitness Under Ground (b)

¶ 45 We begin with the court's determination that A.B. was unfit under ground (b) for failing to "maintain a reasonable degree of interest, concern or responsibility" in the welfare of their child. 750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b) (West 2024). The language of ground (b) is disjunctive, meaning that failing to maintain a reasonable degree of any of the elements may independently justify a finding of unfitness. *In re Nicholas C.*, 2017 IL App (1st) 162101, ¶ 24. This analysis focuses on the reasonableness of the parent's efforts, taking into account individual difficulties and circumstances. *Id.* When evaluating whether a parent is demonstrating reasonable concern, interest, or responsibility in the child's welfare, the court should consider the parent's difficulty in obtaining transportation to visit the child, the parent's financial situation, any actions or

statements that may hinder or discourage visitation, and whether the parent's failure to visit was motivated by the need to cope with other life circumstances or indicates true indifference to the child. *In re Adoption of Syck*, 138 Ill. 2d 255, 279 (1990).

¶ 46 Depending on the content, tone, and frequency of contacts, a parent may still demonstrate a reasonable degree of concern, interest, or responsibility even when personal visits are impractical. *In re M.I. v. J.B.*, 2016 IL 120232, ¶ 28. But merely showing some interest or affection toward a child does not inherently make a parent fit or their efforts reasonable. *Id.*; *In re Jaron Z.*, 348 Ill. App. 3d 239, 259 (2004). "Noncompliance with an imposed service plan and infrequent or irregular visitation with the child may be sufficient to warrant a finding of unfitness under section (b)." *In re Konstantinos H.*, 387 Ill. App. 3d 192, 204 (2008). Unlike ground (m), addressed later, ground (b) has no time constraint that limits the consideration of a parent's fitness. *Nicholas C.*, 2017 IL App (1st) 162101, ¶ 21

¶ 47 A.B. contends the trial court's finding of unfitness under section (b) was against the manifest weight of the evidence because he did his best. He participated in an integrated assessment, attended eight out of ten parenting classes and counseling sessions, and made efforts to visit with A.S. These visits were deemed appropriate; he fed the baby a bottle, changed his diaper, and brought him gifts. He asserts his relationship with Unity Parenting went "awry" when Garrett rescinded unsupervised visits based on a false accusation that he had been convicted of kidnapping. As a result, he stopped visiting A.S., believing Garrett revoked both supervised and unsupervised visits. The only evidence of his lack of cooperation was his not giving the agency his address, which he contends they had had since 2021.

¶ 48 He also contends that neither Garrett nor Henderson-Smith made adequate efforts to locate him before petitioning to terminate his parental rights, which was never served on him.

¶ 49 We do not dispute A.B.'s assertion that he did the best he could. Nevertheless, the trial court's finding was not against the manifest weight of the evidence. The record indicates A.B. was assessed for services and identified as needing parenting classes, individual therapy, a domestic violence assessment, and a parenting capacity assessment. Despite participating in an integrated assessment and initially engaging in parenting classes and individual therapy, he did not complete them. Nor did he participate in a domestic violence assessment.

¶ 50 Regarding visits, A.B.'s attendance was inconsistent throughout the duration of the case; he attended about 20% of scheduled visits. As noted, the agency eventually allowed unsupervised visits, which were suspended after a month due to safety concerns. From then on, he attended about 10% of the visits and then stopped visiting entirely.

¶ 51 While we will take a parent's difficulties and circumstances into account, A.B. does not explain his failure to complete services, other than acknowledge that he "slip[ped] up." Nor do his reasons for not visiting A.S. withstand scrutiny. He initially attended just 20% of the supervised visits. He claims that once the agency revoked unsupervised visits, he thought he was prohibited from visiting at all. But Nicela Guy testified that after the agency revoked unsupervised visits and reinstated supervised visits, A.B. attended about 10% of the time, which belies his assertion.

¶ 52 Additionally, Garrett's testimony refutes A.B.'s claim that caseworkers failed to facilitate visits after they terminated unsupervised visits. She stated that she met with A.B. after a May 2023 court session to discuss visits and to obtain his address, and she called him for almost two months, but he did not respond. Nor did A.B. call or send letters or gifts to A.S. instead of visits, which would have demonstrated a degree of concern, interest, or responsibility had visits not been possible. See *In re M.I.*, 2016 IL 120232, ¶ 28.

¶ 53 As noted, "[n]oncompliance with an imposed service plan and infrequent or irregular visitation with the child may be sufficient to warrant a finding of unfitness under section (b)." *In re Konstantinos H.*, 387 Ill. App. 3d 192, 204 (2008). Given the evidence and testimony indicating that A.B. failed to complete services or visit with A.S. regularly, the trial court's conclusion that A.B. did not maintain a reasonable degree of interest, concern, or responsibility in A.S.'s welfare is not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 54 Unfitness Under Ground (m)

¶ 55 Ground (m) sets out "two independent bases for a finding of unfitness: (i) the failure by a parent to make reasonable efforts to correct the conditions that were the basis for the removal of the child, or (ii) the failure to make reasonable progress toward the return of the child." *In re C.N.*, 196 Ill. 2d 181, 210-11 (2001) (Emphasis omitted). Under ground (m), the court needs only to find one nine-month period where the parent failed to make reasonable efforts or progress to sustain an unfitness finding. *In re Phoenix F.*, 2016 Ill. App (2d) 150431 ¶ 7. The State focuses on reasonable progress rather than reasonable efforts, and so do we.

¶ 56 The benchmark for measuring a parent's "progress toward the return of the child" includes compliance with the service plans and the court's directives, in the context of the conditions leading to the child's removal, and any other conditions that later become known and that would prevent the court from returning custody to the parent. *In re C.N.*, 196 Ill. 2d at 216-17. Determining whether a parent has made reasonable progress "is judged by an objective standard based upon the amount of progress measured from the conditions existing at the time custody was taken from the parent." *In re Daphnie E.*, 368 Ill. App. 3d at 1067. "Reasonable progress exists when the trial court can conclude that it will be able to order the child returned to parental custody in the near future." *Id.* At a minimum, reasonable progress necessitates

measurable or demonstrable movement toward the goal of reunification. *Id*. Failure to comply with an imposed service plan and infrequent or irregular visitation with the child may support a finding of unfitness under section (m). *In re Jeanette L*., 2017 IL App (1st) 161944, ¶ 18.

¶ 57 The State alleged A.B. failed to make progress during three nine-month periods. A finding of lack of progress during any one period is enough to affirm the trial court's finding.

¶ 58 A.B. asserts he made reasonable progress during the first two nine-month period. Although he did not complete all services or attend every visit, he "made the effort to accomplish whatever he could to satisfy the agency." As to the third nine-month period, A.B. contends the case had been transferred to DCFS by then, and he had been "shut-out of the process." He believed all visits were suspended and DCFS made little or no effort to contact him at the address and phone number he provided when the case entered the system and again in court in May 2023.

¶ 59 When the case came into the system, A.B. was referred for a parenting capacity assessment and domestic violence classes. He did not participate. He was twice referred for parenting classes, but did not complete them and stopped going to individual therapy. He was inconsistent with his visits, attending about 20% of the supervised visits. After the agency revoked his unsupervised visits in May 2023, he attended about 10% of the time before stopping. He then refused to cooperate and would not provide his address to the caseworker.

¶ 60 Accordingly, we affirm the trial court's finding that A.B. was unfit under ground (m)(ii) because he never made reasonable progress during any of the three nine-month periods toward A.S. being returned home in the near future. See *J.H.*, 2014 IL App (3d) 140185, ¶ 22 (affirming unfitness finding where parent failed to make measurable movement toward reunification with parent during any nine-month period).

¶ 61 Termination of Parental Rights

¶ 62 A.B. next contends the State failed to prove terminating his parental rights was in A.S.'s best interests.

¶ 63 When the trial court finds a parent unfit under one of the grounds of section 1(D) of the Adoption Act, it must determine whether termination of parental rights is in the best interests of the child under 1-3 (4.05) of the Juvenile Court Act (705 ILCS 405/1-3(4.05) (West 2024)). The State bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that termination is in the child's best interest. See *In re D.T.*, 212 Ill. 2d 347, 366 (2004). We will not disturb a best interest determination unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence, meaning the opposite conclusion is clearly evident. *In re Deandre D.*, 405 Ill. App. 3d 945, 953 (2010).

¶ 64 Under section 1-3 (4.05) of the Juvenile Court Act, the court must consider several factors when deciding the best interests of a child, among them: (i) the child's physical safety and welfare, (ii) the development of the child's identity, (iii) the child's background and ties, including familial, cultural, and religious (iv) the child's sense of attachment, including love, security, familiarity, continuity of affection, and the least disruptive placement alternative, (v) the child's wishes and long-term goals, (vi) the child's community ties, including church, school, and friends, (vii) the child's need for permanence including the need for stability and continuity of relationships with parent figures and other relatives, (viii) the uniqueness of the family and child, (ix) the risks in substitute care, and (x) the preferences of the person available to care for the child. 705 ILCS 405/1-3(4.05) (West 2024).

¶ 65 Another key factor is the bond a child forms with the foster parent, especially over time. See *Tajannah O.*, 2014 IL App (1st) 133119 ¶¶ 19-29; *In re Angela D.*, 2012 IL App (1st) 112887, ¶¶ 37-39. In some cases, the foster parent's willingness to maintain contact between

the child and a biological parent is significant as well. See *Angela D.*, 2012 IL App (1st) 112887, ¶ 41. The trial court need not explicitly mention each best interest factor in its decision. *In re Deandre D.*, 405 Ill. App. 3d 945, 954-44 (2010).

¶ 66 A.B. does not argue that the trial court misapplied the section 1-3(4.05) factors in making its best interest finding. Instead, he contends that DCFS and Unity Parenting created conditions that hindered his relationship with A.S. and then relied on those conditions to terminate his parental rights. A.B. asserts that numerous caseworkers were assigned and they failed to communicate with him, which frustrated him and delayed his progress in having A.S. returned to him. The record shows that multiple caseworkers handled this case, but it does not support the contention that they failed to make efforts to communicate with him. Moreover, those arguments pertain to the unfitness finding, not the best interest finding. *Syck*, 138 Ill. 2d at 279 (unfitness under ground (b) considers the reasonableness of the parent's efforts under the circumstances, including actions of others that hinder visitation).

¶ 67 Turning to the best interest finding, the evidence showed A.S. has been in a stable pre-adoptive home almost since birth. He has a close and loving relationship with his foster parent, whom he calls "mommy," and with her adopted son and foster daughter. S.G. has ensured that A.S.'s needs are met and is committed to maintaining A.S.'s relationship with his siblings and A.B. Based on this evidence and testimony, the trial court concluded it was in A.S.'s best interest to terminate A.B.'s parental rights and to appoint a guardian with the right to consent to the child's adoption. That finding is not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 68 Affirmed.