

NON-PRECEDENTIAL DECISION - SEE SUPERIOR COURT O.P. 65.37

IN THE INTEREST OF: A.W.-C., A
MINOR

: IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF
: PENNSYLVANIA

APPEAL OF: L.W.-C., MOTHER

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: No. 998 EDA 2026

Appeal from the Order Entered March 5, 2026
In the Court of Common Pleas of Monroe County Juvenile Division at
No(s): CP-45-DP-0000103-2018

BEFORE: BOWES, J., OLSON, J., and McLAUGHLIN, J.

MEMORANDUM BY BOWES, J.:

FILED SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

L.W.-C. ("Mother") appeals from the order changing the permanent placement goal for her daughter, A.W.-C., from a primary goal of reunification and a concurrent goal of adoption, to a primary goal of adoption and a concurrent goal of reunification. We affirm.

We glean the following from the certified record. A.W.-C. was born in November of 2016, and has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and neurofibromatosis.¹ **See** N.T., 1/14/26, at 6. As a result, she has limited speech and language skills, and requires an Individualized Education Program ("IEP") to address her autism and related aggressive behavior, which includes, *inter alia*, banging her head "off of everything and anything that she [can],"

¹ Neurofibromatosis is not defined in the record.

headbutting, and kicking. ***Id.*** at 39, 42, 56; ***see also*** N.T., 2/9/26, at 124. A.W.-C. participates in outpatient programs through Children's Hospital of Philadelphia ("CHOP") to address her neurological and educational needs.

The child was first adjudicated dependent on December 10, 2018, when the trial court granted a petition filed by the Monroe County Children and Youth Services ("CYS") and found that she was a victim of child abuse due to Mother's serious physical neglect. ***See*** Order of Adjudication and Disposition, 12/18/18, at 2. A.W.-C. was removed from Mother's custody but returned to her approximately one year later. The trial court terminated its supervision by order entered on March 5, 2020. Thereafter, CYS had no involvement with the family for approximately three years.

On July 23, 2023, the trial court placed then-seven-year-old A.W.-C. in the protective custody of CYS as a result of Mother's being hospitalized and requiring childcare. However, one month later, the court denied CYS's request to place the child in shelter care and returned her to Mother's physical and legal custody following her discharge from the hospital. Mother requested that CYS return the child's belongings from her short-term placement, and CYS promised to collect the belongings and bring them to Mother's home, which it did on August 9, 2023. According to Michele Haydt, the program manager of the CYS permanency services unit, Mother would not allow the caseworker to step onto the porch, which the caseworker observed was filled with garbage. The caseworker left the child's belongings outside of Mother's

house, and later that day, Mother called the police to report that CYS “had left a bomb on her porch[.]” N.T., 1/14/26, at 10.

On August 18, 2023, CYS filed a dependency petition averring that A.W.-C. was without proper parental care and control pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S. § 6302(1). The agency alleged that Mother refused to allow it access to the family’s residence to assess the safety of A.W.-C. A dependency hearing was held on August 23, 2023, at the conclusion of which the trial court adjudicated A.W.-C. dependent, set her permanent placement goal as remaining with the parent, and ordered that she remain in Mother’s home.

Mother allowed CYS to see A.W.-C. two months thereafter, and informed the agency that the child was enrolled in cyber school. However, A.W.-C. was not actively attending cyber school because of Wi-Fi issues in the home, and Mother claimed she needed a new computer.

The first permanency review hearing occurred on November 27, 2023. The corresponding order directed Mother to, *inter alia*, resolve the issue of A.W.-C.’s “missed schooling so there are no more interruptions” and to consider in-person schooling for the child. **See** Permanency Review Order, 11/27/23, at 3. In addition, the court found that Mother was giving medical marijuana to A.W.-C. and directed Mother to provide CYS with the name of the prescribing physician and permit it “to see the actual medical marijuana the minor child takes.” **Id.** The order also directed Mother to satisfy the following additional permanency plan goals: allow CYS to enter her home and

see the child once per week; keep the home clean and sanitary; and provide CYS with the child's medical information and the names and contact information of her healthcare providers. The court maintained A.W.-C.'s placement in Mother's home and identified the primary permanent placement goal as remaining with the parent but added a concurrent goal of adoption.

The next permanency hearing occurred on January 5, 2024, at which the trial court found that Mother was in minimal compliance with the permanency plan. Consequently, the trial court removed A.W.-C. from Mother's physical custody, changed the primary goal to return to parent while maintaining the concurrent goal of adoption, and directed weekly supervised visitation between Mother and the child. It further ordered that Mother obtain a psychological evaluation and receive mental health treatment. **See** N.T., 1/14/26, at 46-47. Thereafter, CYS placed A.W.-C. in foster care with S.C. ("Foster Mother"), whom Ms. Haydt opined provided "a stable relationship and resource" for the child. **Id.** at 28.

CYS arranged for A.W.-C. to be enrolled in an in-school autistic support classroom, and a caseworker transported A.W.-C. to an appointment with her regular pediatrician, which Mother also attended. The pediatrician revealed that there was no record of the child being prescribed medical marijuana. The following day, CYS received a phone call from the director of the medical practice that employed the pediatrician advising that the child should not be given marijuana "unless she was seen regularly by an oncologist." **Id.** at 30.

The director also told CYS that, according to Mother's request, the child will no longer be treated by the same pediatrician. Despite this medical advice, the record reflects that Mother continually requested that CYS administer medical marijuana to A.W.-C.

Mother obtained a psychological evaluation from a provider identified as Olive and Oak, but according to Ms. Haydt, it was inconclusive because Mother was uncooperative. Specifically, CYS learned that "the personality testing that was conducted came back invalid due to [Mother] being defensive and unwilling to disclose information." N.T., 1/14/26, at 79. The provider reported that Mother is "defiant with thoughts and doesn't want to conform to others. [She] has poor psychological boundaries." ***Id.*** at 80.

On May 31, 2024, the trial court conducted another permanency hearing and concluded that Mother continued to be in minimal compliance with the permanency plan. It found that Mother had been participating in supervised visitation through Justice Works twice per week for two hours, but "due to conflict/struggles between" Mother and Justice Works, that agency was unwilling to continue supervising the visits. ***See*** Permanency Review Order, 5/31/24, at 2. Therefore, CYS began supervising the visits at its office once per week for one hour. With respect to A.W.-C.'s status, CYS had registered her in a neurofibromatosis program at CHOP. She was also evaluated for services by the local Intermediate Unit ("IU"), which provided special

education assistance for the school district, and was approved to receive two services, including one for behavioral health.

An educational coordinator from CHOP conducted a virtual meeting with CYS and Mother about different schooling options for A.W.-C. because her aggressive behavior was “more severe” and could not be controlled in the classroom she was then attending. **See** N.T., 1/14/26, at 66. Ms. Haydt confirmed that Mother joined the meeting late and

[s]he kept interrupting the meeting, again stating she was being retaliated against and discriminated against and was under duress and again wanted [A.W.-C.] in cyber school. She was informed by the educational coordinator from CHOP that cyber school is not a good idea for children with autism. They don’t have that attention span to sit in front of the computer. [Mother] would not let anyone else speak, kept talking about how she had been wronged and it was discrimination and the meeting had to end.

Id. In any event, the educational coordinator revealed that two programs existed which offered school settings “that could help to meet [A.W.-C.’s] needs.” **Id.**

At the next permanency review hearing on August 21, 2024, the trial court again found Mother in minimal compliance with the permanency plan. A.W.-C. was then under the care of a psychiatrist “due to her aggression and sleeping struggles,” and she continued to be evaluated and accepted for more services, such as “[p]lay [t]herapy.” Permanency Review Order, 8/21/24, at 3.

However, during the December 4, 2024 review hearing, the trial court found that Mother was in moderate compliance with the permanency plan and

had made moderate progress. She had successfully attended supervised visits with A.W.-C. and cleaned and removed debris from her home. Mother also participated in an IEP meeting for the child, as well as a parent-teacher conference. It was revealed during those educational meetings that A.W.-C., then approximately eight years old, “was mastering a lot of tasks that were in her IEP,” including using “more language,” and her reading and math skills, and aggressive behavior, had improved. **See** N.T., 1/14/26, at 105.

In fact, Ms. Haydt confirmed that Mother was moving in “a positive direction for reunification,” and the court permitted CY5 to work on a “very slow transition” of the child to return home. **Id.** at 106-07. The permanency order permitted Mother unsupervised visits in the community once per week for one hour, and indicated that A.W.-C.’s medical treatment and services remained the same. The day following this hearing, the trial court issued an order that removed Mother’s requirement to obtain a psychological evaluation but directed her to “continue to attend counseling . . . with her treating psychiatrist.” Order, 12/5/24, at ¶¶ 1, 3.

A few weeks thereafter, CY5 visited A.W.-C. in Foster Mother’s home, at which time Foster Mother declared that the child “continues to do well in her home.” N.T., 1/14/26, at 107-08. Foster Mother had the child complete chores, and she did “very well with them.” **Id.** at 108 (cleaned up). For example, she “put the silverware away from the dishwasher [and got] the laundry out of the dryer[.]” **Id.** CY5 also developed a calendar for A.W.-C.’s

transition home, which included A.W.-C. periodically staying overnight with Mother and using bus transportation to and from school.

On March 7, 2025, the trial court approved the child's return to Mother's home, while CYS maintained legal custody. However, on two subsequent occasions that month, A.W.-C.'s school notified CYS that the child arrived in dirty clothes, some of which had dog feces on them. CYS discussed these reports with Mother and reiterated that the child needed to be dressed in appropriate clothing. Mother also requested that A.W.-C. "do a respite" with Foster Mother, which meant that A.W.-C. stayed with Foster Mother overnight. ***Id.*** at 116. When A.W.-C. returned to Mother, the school reported to CYS that the child came to school without her helmet, which she was required to wear because of her head-banging behavior. From April 11 to April 14, 2025, and again from May 2 to 5, 2025, A.W.-C. went into respite care with Foster Mother, each time at Mother's request.

The next review hearing occurred on May 14, 2025, and the court found Mother was in moderate compliance and had made moderate progress in satisfying the permanency plan. However, the following day, Mother informed CYS about "the different issues that she was having" with the behavioral specialist from the IU, who treated A.W.-C. in the home on a regular basis. ***Id.*** at 129. On the same day, the school informed CYS that Mother "was extremely rude" to the teacher and other staff allegedly because "they're sending [A.W.-C.] home in different clothes." ***Id.*** The school further reported

to CYS that the child “comes to school not prepared for the day; she doesn’t have her folder; she has no socks on, and, sometimes, she has no underwear; her clothes are visibly dirty; she doesn’t have her helmet, and [Mother] told the teacher that she needed to find it.” **Id.** at 129 (cleaned up). Mother disagreed about A.W.-C. not wearing underwear and told CYS that the child wears “religious underwear, that are similar to biker shorts.”² **Id.** at 131 (cleaned up).

A few days thereafter, the IU informed CYS that the behavioral specialist “did not feel comfortable going to” Mother’s home. **Id.** at 131-132. As a result, the IU informed CYS that A.W.-C. would receive behavioral services in school only.

CYS then received an anonymous Child Protective Services (“CPS”) referral, which included allegations that A.W.-C.’s teacher and classroom aides “were abusing her.” N.T., 2/9/26, at 6. Specifically, the report claimed that the school was aware that A.W.-C. was allergic to chocolate, but the teacher forced her “to eat chocolate, shoving it down her throat.” **Id.** Further, the referral alleged that the IU “had been involved in beating the child [two] years prior and now they were continuing to try to cover it up and continuing to try to harm the child by feeding her chocolate.” **Id.** Lastly, the statement asserted that “the teachers and the aides hate the child because they are all

² Mother told CYS that she practices “voodoo,” and that she expected the child to continue practicing it while in foster care. **See** N.T., 2/9/26, at 30, 83.

Caucasian” and A.W.-C is Black. **Id.** CYS visited Mother on the same day it received the referral, and Mother repeated these allegations to the caseworker.

A.W.-C. spent the following Memorial Day weekend in respite care with Foster Mother. A few days after her return home, Mother requested that the child go in respite care with Foster Mother from June 9 to June 23, 2025, which CYS permitted. On June 25, 2025, Mother requested that the child again go in respite, which CYS denied because she had been with Foster Mother “for the past two weeks and she should be at home with” Mother. **See** N.T., 2/9/26, at 10-11.

Approximately one month thereafter, CYS received a referral alleging that Mother and A.W.-C. were presently in the courthouse, and A.W.-C. “was covered in . . . bruises and asking people for help[.]” **Id.** at 12. CYS immediately went to the courthouse, and Mother claimed that “a judge assaulted” A.W.-C., “the judge called [A.W.-C.] the N word and that [CYS] had raped the child, giving her an STD[,] and [CYS] then [got] the paperwork through the doctor’s office cleared up so no one would know.” **Id.** Law enforcement ordered that crisis mental health service respond to the courthouse because of Mother’s behavior, and when the personnel arrived, Mother was voluntarily hospitalized. As a result, CYS immediately requested and was granted permission by the trial court to return A.W.-C. to Foster

Mother's care. Mother was released from the hospital no more than three days later.

At the end of July 2025, Mother's visitation with A.W.-C. became supervised again by Justice Works for two hours per week. The school district verified with CYS that A.W.-C. would begin third grade in an autistic support classroom. CYS visited the foster home, and Foster Mother confirmed that the child "was doing well since [returning] to her full[-]time." ***Id.*** at 25. On the same day, the CYS caseworker contacted the child's psychiatrist to clarify her prescriptions and learned that the child had missed her appointments in May and June of 2025, while in Mother's physical custody, and that no prescriptions were filled during those months.

Foster Mother informed CYS in early September 2025 that she was moving out of state later that same month. The next permanency review hearing occurred on September 15, 2025, and the record reveals only that the court maintained the child's dependency and placement in foster care. On the day after the hearing, CYS found a new placement for A.W.-C. with a group home identified as Persons Directed Supports ("PDS"). ***Id.*** at 28-29. However, this meant that A.W.-C. was then residing in a different school district, *i.e.*, the Parkland School District, which did not have an immediate opening for her in its autistic support program. A.W.-C. was eventually accepted into an enhanced autism program in the Carbon County School District.

On October 31, 2025, CYS filed a petition seeking to change A.W.-C.'s permanent placement goal from a primary goal of reunification to a primary goal of adoption. A hearing on the petition was scheduled for January 14, 2026. In the interim, CYS received a report from Justice Works regarding Mother's supervised visit, during which Mother "had pulled [A.W.-C.]'s pants down and . . . told the worker that she was checking [A.W.-C.] to make sure she was not sexually abused." ***Id.*** at 34. Mother also accused staff at PDS of "touching" the child. ***Id.***

A.W.-C. then began schooling in her new third-grade autistic support classroom. As a result of the child starting school and the length of the transportation to and from the school to the Justice Works' office location, CYS decreased Mother's supervised visits from two hours to one and one-half hours per week. During this period, PDS reported to CYS that A.W.-C. "was doing well" in the group home. ***Id.*** at 33-34.

A goal change hearing commenced as scheduled on January 14, 2026, at which CYS presented the testimony of Ms. Haydt, the program manager of the CYS permanency services unit.³ Due to the length of Ms. Haydt's testimony, the court continued the hearing. That day, it also issued a permanency review order finding that Mother had made minimal progress toward alleviating the circumstances which necessitated A.W.-C.'s placement.

³ Mother was represented by Ashley Messoline, Esquire, of the Office of the Public Defender.

Without specifically granting CYS's petition, the court changed the child's permanent placement goal from a primary goal of reunification to a primary goal of adoption. The court also ordered that Mother's supervised visitation would occur over Zoom because "in-person visitation with Mother is contrary to the safety or well-being of" A.W.-C. **See** Permanency Review Order, 1/14/26, at 2.

CYS continued its case-in-chief on February 9, 2026, by again calling Ms. Haydt and presenting the testimony of the child's current CYS caseworker, Jamie Amoroso. In addition, CYS introduced forty-nine separate pieces of documentary evidence, which the court admitted without objection. Mother testified on her own behalf. Hillary Madden, Esquire, A.W.-C.'s guardian *ad litem* ("GAL"), stated that the goal change was "appropriate" and noted the "significant concerns about what type of resources and care would be provided to [A.W.-C.] if she" returned to Mother.⁴ **See** N.T., 2/9/26, at 134.

By order and opinion entered on March 5, 2026, the trial court granted CYS's petition to change A.W.-C.'s primary goal of reunification and a

⁴ Attorney Madden was appointed as GAL in accordance with 42 Pa.C.S. § 6311, mandating that a GAL be appointed for a child who has been adjudicated dependent based upon a determination that, *inter alia*, the child has been without proper parental control, subsistence, or education. **Id.** As GAL, Attorney Madden must "represent the legal interests and the best interests of" A.W.-C., and continue representation "at every stage of the proceedings." **Id.** In this Court, Attorney Madden submitted a brief in support of the primary goal change to adoption based upon the continuing "challenges faced by [M]other's mental health and the child's special needs." GAL brief at 10.

concurrent goal of adoption to a primary goal of adoption and a concurrent goal of reunification. Mother timely filed a notice of appeal along with a concise statement of errors complained of on appeal.⁵ With respect to the trial court's rationale for changing the child's goal, the court filed a statement pursuant to Pa.R.A.P. 1925(a)(2)(ii), relying upon its opinion that accompanied the goal change order. Mother presents the following question for our review: "Whether the court abused its discretion in finding that [CYS] proved that changing the goal for permanency to adoption is in the best interest of the child?" Mother's brief at 4.

We review Mother's issue for an abuse of discretion, which requires that we "accept the findings of fact and credibility determinations of the trial court if they are supported by the record." ***Interest of K.C.***, 319 A.3d 596, 599-600 (Pa.Super. 2024) (citation omitted). We have explained:

Not only are our trial judges observing the parties during the hearing, but usually . . . they have presided over several other hearings with the same parties and have a longitudinal understanding of the case and the best interests of the individual child involved. Thus, we must

⁵ Although the January 14, 2026 permanency review order purported to change A.W.-C.'s primary permanent placement goal from reunification to adoption, notice within the meaning of Pa.R.C.P. 236 was not provided to the parties until April 6, 2026. ***See*** Trial Court Docket at 55. As to the March 5, 2026 opinion and order, the trial court provided Rule 236 notice that day. ***Id.*** at 58. Accordingly, Mother properly and timely appealed the order that changed A.W.-C.'s permanency goal to adoption, which was entered in accordance with Rule 236 on March 5, 2026. ***See Frazier v. City of Philadelphia***, 735 A.2d. 113, 115 (Pa. 1999) (holding that "because there was no . . . entry in the docket, formal entry of the order did not occur under the rules, and the appeal period was not triggered").

defer to the trial judges who see and hear the parties and can determine the credibility to be placed on each witness and, premised thereon, gauge the likelihood of the success of the current permanency plan. Even if an appellate court would have made a different conclusion based on the cold record, we are not in a position to reweigh the evidence and the credibility determinations of the trial court.

Id. at 600 (cleaned up). However, “[w]e are not bound by the trial court’s legal conclusions.” **Id.** (cleaned up).

Placement goals are governed by the Juvenile Act, 42 Pa.C.S. §§ 6301-65:

“[Section] 6351 of the Juvenile Act directs that a juvenile court not only consider the appropriateness and feasibility of a child’s current goal during the permanency review hearings, it also mandates that the court enter an order addressing whether to continue, modify or terminate placement.” **In Int. of L.T.**, 158 A.3d 1266, 1278 (Pa.Super. 2017) (citation omitted). Thus, a goal change may occur as a result of a petition by the responsible agency, or *sua sponte* by the trial court during its mandatory review of the dependency matter. **Id.** Regardless of the starting point, we have outlined the analysis a trial court must undertake when modifying a child’s permanent placement goal as follows:

The policy underlying the[Juvenile Act] is to prevent children from languishing indefinitely in foster care, with its inherent lack of permanency, normalcy, and long-term parental commitment. Consistent with this underlying policy, . . . the focus of dependency proceedings, including change of goal proceedings, [is] on the child. Safety, permanency, and well-being of the child must take precedence over **all** other considerations, including the rights of the parents.

Pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S. § 6351(f) of the Juvenile Act, when considering . . . a goal change for a dependent child, the juvenile court is to consider, *inter alia*: (1) the continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement; (2) the extent of compliance with the family service plan; (3) the extent of progress made

towards alleviating the circumstances which necessitated the original placement; (4) the appropriateness and feasibility of the current placement goal for the children; (5) a likely date by which the goal for the child might be achieved; (6) the child's safety; and (7) whether the child has been in placement for at least fifteen of the last twenty-two months. The best interests of the child, and not the interests of the parent, must guide the trial court.

Int. of J.B., 296 A.3d [1234,] 1238–39 [(Pa.Super. 2023)] (cleaned up, emphasis in original).

Additionally, the court must determine “[w]hether reasonable efforts were made to finalize the permanency plan in effect” and whether the current caregiver is providing the child “with regular, ongoing opportunities to participate in age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities.” 42 Pa.C.S. § 6351(f)(5.1), (12). Although we have held that “parental progress toward completion of a permanency plan is an important factor, it is not to be elevated to determinative status, to the exclusion of all other factors.” ***Int. of J.B.***, 296 A.3d at 1239 (cleaned up). Ultimately, “a child’s life simply cannot be put on hold in the hope that the parent will summon the ability to handle the responsibilities of parenting.” ***Id.*** (cleaned up).

Interest of K.C., 319 A.3d at 600–01.

Mother argues that the evidence does not support changing A.W.-C.’s permanent placement goal from a primary goal of reunification to a primary goal of adoption. Specifically, she contends that the goal change is not in the child’s best interests because CYS has not identified an adoptive resource for the child. ***See*** Mother’s brief at 15. Mother asserts that, in determining the appropriateness and feasibility of a goal, trial courts need to consider whether there are pending adoptive resources. ***Id.*** She also claims that adoption is “far-fetched” for this child, and, therefore, it was unreasonable for the court

to conclude that the goal should be changed. ***Id.*** at 20. A.W.-C.'s life has not improved since being in placement, Mother maintains, and while in Mother's physical custody, she was not "in danger or even unhappy." ***Id.*** at 21. Thus, Mother avers that it was not in the child's best interest to change the primary permanent placement goal.

The trial court accompanied its goal change order with an opinion that thoroughly explained its rationale, in relevant part, as follows:

We have previously recognized Mother's behaviors throughout this case. She makes allegations of abuse of the minor child where there [is] none. She calls the police . . . and Childline to report abuse, most of which contain allegations that are bizarre. All have been unfounded. When the minor child had bruising while in Mother's care in July 2025, Mother claimed a judge had hit the minor child and called her the "N" word. However, there was no contact with any judge in that time period, and A.W.-C. and Mother last had a court hearing at the courthouse in May 2025. The allegations would be alarming if true; but even more alarming was that they were not. If Mother truly believes this, as she appears to have at the time, she needs mental health services.

Mother's behavior throughout this case has led CYS and this court to question her mental health. The behaviors described at prior hearings, and at length by Ms. Haydt of CYS at the most recent hearings, are alarming. A mental illness does not mean a parent should not be able to raise a child. The court . . . wants to see mental health issues identified and treated with compassion and understanding, and without bias. But, because Mother's behavior throughout this case gives rise to questions about her mental health, and her ability to care for A.W.-C. as a result, this continues to be the overriding concern. While Mother alleges she is still in counseling with [the mental health provider] Clarvida, she has provided no records. . . . Her behaviors indicate she is not getting the help she needs.

. . . .

The concern regarding Mother, as noted throughout this opinion, is her mental health and inability to change her behaviors. It leads to serious questions of whether or not Mother can safely have A.W.-C. in her care. The past attempt to do so in March 2025 resulted in the decompensation and worsening of Mother's behavior, her inability to send A.W.-C. to school with her safety helmet and clean clothes, and ultimately being taken to the hospital . . . because of her apparent detachment from reality on July 18, 2025. Unfortunately, Mother has done nothing to diminish these concerns since then and continues to exhibit concerning behavior to the present time.

. . . .

Without a definitive mental health evaluation, . . . serious questions continue to exist about Mother and her ability to care for A.W.-C. Due to the length of time the minor child has been dependent and in care, and Mother's continued inability to change and/or to address questions related to her mental health, it is also in A.W.-C.'s best interest to have a goal change to adoption. While there is currently no identified permanent resources to adopt the minor child, a . . . goal of adoption concurrent with a goal of reunification to start to explore that option is best at this time.

Trial Court Opinion, 3/5/26, at 23-25 (cleaned up).

Our Supreme Court's holding in *In re R.J.T.*, 9 A.3d 1179 (Pa. 2010), is instructive. In that case, the child had been placed with foster parents who requested that he be removed, but they withdrew their request following an improvement in the child's behavior. *Id.* at 1183. Thereafter, the child welfare agency represented that the foster parents desired to adopt the child. *Id.* at 1182. Evidence presented during the goal change hearing, however, demonstrated that the child's biological mother and father had made progress with their goals, and the court-appointed psychologist testified that both biological parents demonstrated adequate parenting skills. *Id.* at 1182-83.

The trial court determined that adoption was not best suited for the child because, *inter alia*, it was uncertain that the foster parents would provide long-term stability for the child. ***Id.*** at 1183-85.

On appeal, this Court deemed the trial court's denial of the agency's goal change petition to be an abuse of discretion. ***Id.*** at 1185-89. Our Supreme Court disagreed with this Court's assessment and held that the trial court acted within its discretion in denying the goal change request. ***Id.*** at 1190. Specifically, the High Court reasoned that the evidence supported the trial court's findings that the child's biological parents had made progress with their goals, had positive interactions with the child, and that questions existed with respect to whether the child would have long-term stability with the foster parents. ***Id.***

However, the Supreme Court also stated that the case was "a very close call. Without doubt, the record could have supported a goal change to adoption[.]" ***Id.*** It emphasized that "appellate courts must employ an abuse of discretion standard of review, as we are not in a position to make the close calls based on fact-specific determinations." ***Id.*** Rather, it is the trial judges who are "observing the parties during the hearing," and "usually, as in this case, they have presided over several other hearings with the same parties and have a longitudinal understanding of the case and the best interests of the individual child involved." ***Id.*** The High Court therefore reiterated that we must "defer to the trial judges who see and hear the parties and can

determine the credibility to be placed on each witness and, premised thereon, gauge the likelihood of the success of the current permanency plan.” ***Id.***

Applying the reasoning of ***In re R.J.T.*** to the instant matter, we conclude that there is no merit in Mother’s argument that the trial court abused its discretion in changing A.W.-C.’s primary goal to adoption because CYS had not identified an adoptive resource. First, Mother cites no law, and we are aware of none, requiring the availability of an adoptive resource prior to the trial court changing a permanent placement goal from reunification to adoption particularly where, as here, there is a concurrent goal of reunification. ***See*** Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook, Office of Children and Families in the Courts (4th Ed. 2024) at 10-5 (“Concurrent planning is the practice whereby the agency simultaneously establishes and executes one permanency goal along with a concurrent plan for the child. If, for any reason, the permanency goal does not work out for the child, the concurrent plan can be immediately effectuated.”). The focus is upon the specific considerations enumerated in the Juvenile Act in reviewing a child’s permanency plan, and only the child’s well-being takes precedence, as explained above. ***See K.C.***, 319 A.3d at 600–01.

We reject Mother’s bald contention that adoption for A.W.-C. is “far-fetched” as speculative, at best. ***See*** Mother’s brief at 20. Mother has declined to explicitly state why A.W.-C.’s adoption would be implausible. To the extent that her arguments are premised upon A.W.-C.’s autism and

related behavioral concerns, the record clearly reveals, as detailed above, that A.W.-C.'s behavior and academic abilities have significantly improved while in foster care, including having the child enrolled in in-person autistic support classrooms and programs.

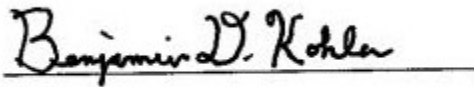
Furthermore, the record indicates that A.W.-C. was capable of forging a positive, beneficial relationship with Foster Mother while in her care. Ms. Haydt confirmed that Foster Mother provided "a stable relationship and resource" for the child, including teaching A.W.-C. how to complete chores and master life skills. **See** N.T., 1/14/26, at 28, 108. We recognize that A.W.-C. had been in a group home for approximately four months at the time of the subject proceedings after Foster Mother relocated. However, PDS reported that A.W.-C. had been "doing well." **See** N.T., 2/9/26, at 33-34. By changing A.W.-C.'s primary placement goal, the trial court created the possibility of exploring adoption for the child with an individual similar to Foster Mother. In addition, the order sets forth a concurrent goal of reunification for A.W.-C. Thus, CYS still must consider reunification as a potential alternative should an adoptive resource not be found.

Based upon our thorough review of the extensive record in this case and the applicable law, we conclude that Mother's issue on appeal is without merit. Accordingly, we affirm the trial court's order changing A.W.-C.'s permanent placement goal from a primary goal of reunification and a concurrent goal of

adoption to a primary goal of adoption and a concurrent goal of reunification,
as being in A.W.-C.'s best interests.

Order affirmed.

Judgment Entered.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Benjamin D. Kohler", is written over a horizontal line.

Benjamin D. Kohler, Esq.
Prothonotary

Date: 9/21/2026