

Local News

Parents' rights not terminated

By Logan G. Carver | AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Tuesday, January 06, 2009

Story last updated at 1/6/2009 - 1:16 am

A Lubbock couple accused of grossly neglecting their children while living in deplorable conditions will not permanently lose custody of all their children.

Instead Gloria Ramirez and Anthony Moya will relinquish custody of the oldest and youngest of the seven children removed from the home in July 2007, while continuing to work to prove they are responsible enough to someday have custody of the remaining five.

The couple's parental rights were not terminated, but Child Protective Services will retain permanent managing conservatorship, leaving the five children in foster care and allowing Ramirez and Moya visitation.

Attorneys announced in court Monday Moya and Ramirez had reached an agreement with CPS during arbitration Dec. 22. "Our hope is that it's not permanent for the remainder of these childrens' childhood," said Neal Burt, an assistant district attorney with the county's civil division representing CPS.

Phone calls to Angela Baskerville, Moya's attorney, were not returned late Monday and Lisa Ratzke, Ramirez's attorney, could not be reached.

In theory, Monday's agreement is a final resolution, but is also an opportunity for Ramirez and Moya to have more time to take advantage of the services they have been receiving such as homemaking and parenting classes, as well as therapy, Burt said.

Burt said he hopes with the services offered and the therapy, the parents will be able to be seriously considered for permanent placement, allowing the children to be reunited with their parents.

The five children were going to be placed with a grandmother, but she died in a car accident on the way to the court hearing in October.

"That left us with a tough situation to find a placement for those five kids," Burt said.

The seven children, six of them Moya's, were removed from the couple's home in July 2007 after police officers were called to investigate a miscarried fetus.

Ramirez had stuffed the fetus in the refrigerator. Officers not only found the fetus, but saw that the children were living in putrid squalor.

Mounds of soiled diapers were piled on top of trash and animal feces.

Ramirez contacted The Avalanche-Journal in December asking to tell her side of the story, but did not show up to the scheduled interview at her current residence and did not return phone calls.

The gate to her home was padlocked from the outside.

Ramirez and Moya are still facing criminal charges related to the neglect of the seven children.

Ramirez gave birth to twins in May 2008 and they were taken from her three days later

. That removal is a separate case from the one resolved Monday, Burt said, but added he hopes Ramirez and Moya can one day be considered a permanent placement option for the twins.

CPS hopes to combine the cases some time before the scheduled final hearing for the twins in May, said department spokesman Greg Cunningham.

"As far as the department is concerned, our goal has always been to protect the children," Cunningham said. "Whatever happens down the road, we'll deal with that later."

Cunningham added that the CPS recommendation has always been the termination of parental rights and placing the children in adoptive homes.

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