

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
IN COURT OF APPEALS
A25-0905**

In the Matter of the Welfare of the Child(ren) of:
M. P. and A. P., Parents.

**Filed December 22, 2025
Affirmed
Frisch, Chief Judge**

St. Louis County District Court
File No. 69DU-JV-24-74

A.P., Duluth, Minnesota (pro se appellant)

Kimberly J. Maki, St. Louis County Attorney, Jennifer J. Barry, Assistant County Attorney,
Duluth, Minnesota (for respondent St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services)

Christy Hammer, Duluth, Minnesota (guardian ad litem)

Considered and decided by Frisch, Chief Judge; Cochran, Judge; and Kirk, Judge.*

NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION

FRISCH, Chief Judge

On appeal from the termination of his parental rights, appellant-father challenges the district court's determinations that respondent-county made reasonable efforts to reunite him with the child, that termination of his parental rights is supported by a statutory

* Retired judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, serving by appointment pursuant to Minn. Const. art. VI, § 10.

basis, and that termination of his parental rights is in the best interests of the child. Because we discern no abuse of discretion in the district court's determinations, we affirm.

FACTS

This case concerns the termination of appellant-father A.P.'s parental rights to his child, A.P., born in 2023. Mother is not involved in this appeal.

In July 2023, about a month before child's birth, respondent St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services (the county) learned that child may have had prenatal exposure to drugs. After child's birth in August 2023, hospital testing revealed in-utero exposure to amphetamines and marijuana. Child was admitted to the neonatal intensive-care unit for withdrawal symptoms associated with neonatal abstinence syndrome. The same month, the county filed a petition to open a child-in-need-of-protection-or-services (CHIPS) case. In that petition, the county set forth father's history of being under guardianship, mental-health concerns, and angry behavior, all of which affect his ability to care for child. The district court adjudicated child CHIPS in February 2024, and child was placed with resource parents once discharged from the hospital. Shortly thereafter, the county filed a petition for termination of father's parental rights. Following a five-day trial, the district court involuntarily terminated father's parental rights in April 2025. The following facts are derived from the trial on the county's petition to terminate father's parental rights.

The county provided father with a case plan, and social workers discussed the proposed case plan with father. The case plan required father to: complete a relative survey; maintain absolute sobriety monitored by random urinalysis (UA) or blood-analysis testing; participate in parenting education; maintain safe, stable housing; complete a

psychological evaluation and follow any recommendations from that evaluation; maintain regular visitation with child; execute releases of information for service providers; remain law-abiding; and complete a Domestic Abuse Intervention Program (DAIP). The district court approved the case plan in September 2023.

Over the next several months, the county sought to provide services to father and coordinate with father on his case-plan requirements. Father and the county completed a relative survey to identify potential relatives as placement options. Father also learned that DAIP was inapplicable to his situation, so he did not complete that program. But father struggled with several other services the county provided.

Father did not maintain absolute sobriety, and it is unclear if he completed a parenting-education program. A social worker testified that father complied with random calls for UA testing “like 21 or 22 out of 130 times” and “provided eight out of 32 required tests.” Of the tests he did take, father tested positive for alcohol and THC many times, including between trial dates in March 2025. Father was removed from the Circles of Security parenting-education program after an argument with another participant. Father testified that he completed a parenting program in Wisconsin, but he could not remember the program’s name or its instructor, and his social worker at the time had no information about the program.

The county attempted to connect father with mental-health services in September 2023, shortly after initiating the CHIPS case. But then father disengaged from the county for five months, from December 2023 to May 2024.

When father re-engaged with the county, the county referred him for a psychological evaluation. Because of wait times, the county directed father to complete a diagnostic assessment, which he completed in July 2024. A social worker testified that father did not authorize the county to provide collateral information for the diagnostic assessment¹ and that father was not fully honest in self-reporting during the assessment. The assessment recommended that father consult with a primary-care provider, pursue individual therapy, and engage with medication management.

Despite the wait times, the county arranged for a special appointment for father to complete a psychological evaluation. The evaluation occurred in October 2024, and a written report was issued later that month. The psychologist considered collateral information, including court reports, the CHIPS petition, visitation summaries, and father's history under guardianship.

The psychologist diagnosed father with an unspecified neurodevelopmental disorder and maintained a historical diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder with substance-use disorders. She also opined that father shows traits of antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder. At trial, she testified that these diagnoses increase the risk for dysfunctional parenting, elevate concerns for father committing physical abuse, and increase the risk of father being emotionally unpredictable so as to endanger a child's emotional development. Father's reactivity also increases the likelihood

¹ One of the social workers assigned to the case testified at trial that a diagnostic assessment is not as thorough as a psychological assessment because it does not consider collateral information and relies only on the information father provided.

that he will resist recommendations from others, which is especially concerning for parents. For example, if father were to disagree with a doctor's diagnosis about child, father's reactivity risks his ability to accept that diagnosis. The psychologist explained that father could struggle to provide:

Safe and predictable housing that is free from substances and free from violence, free from police intervention; consistent access to—not necessarily financial resources, but—but daily needs, such as water, food; again, having that consistently available and predictably available. Having a calm, regulated parent.

The psychologist testified that she had “significant concerns about reactive parenting and punitive parenting to the extent that . . . [there are] concerns about potential even unintentional physical harm.” She recommended father pursue dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), a medication assessment, and parenting support. She also opined that father showed a significant lack of insight into his condition.

Father began individual DBT in January 2025 and a group component in March 2025. Father's therapist testified that, as of trial, father was focusing on “basic emotional support and . . . validation.” The therapist's work with father was based on the July 2024 diagnostic assessment. That assessment was based on only what father told the therapist. Father told the therapist that he had been sober for ten years, had no behavioral issues or concerns over emotional regulation, and did not mention that he had been under guardianship for nearly a decade. The therapist testified that he cannot speak to whether father's improvements would “have a positive impact on his ability to parent children,” but continued treatment would benefit father's emotional regulation.

In February 2024, the county petitioned to terminate father's parental rights. The petition was based on four statutory grounds for termination: (1) failure to comply with the duties imposed by the parent-child relationship; (2) palpable unfitness; (3) failure to correct the conditions that led to the child's out-of-home placement, despite reasonable efforts by the county; and (4) neglect of the child and current placement in foster care. *See* Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b)(2), (3), (4), (7) (2024). The petition further asserted that the county undertook reasonable efforts to rehabilitate father and reunify him with child and that termination was in child's best interests.

The district court held a five-day trial in January and March 2025. The district court received 25 exhibits and heard testimony from 12 witnesses, including four county social workers, one of child's resource parents, the psychologist who administered father's psychological evaluation, father, the social worker who supervised father's visits with child, father's therapist, father's former employee, father's friend, and the guardian ad litem (GAL). In April 2025, the district court issued a written order terminating father's parental rights to child. Based on the testimony from the county's witnesses, which the district court found credible and persuasive, the district court concluded that the county proved by clear and convincing evidence that the four statutory grounds for termination set forth in the petition were met.

The district court also concluded that the county made reasonable efforts to rehabilitate father and reunify father with child. In making this determination, the district court credited testimony from the county's witnesses regarding the specific efforts the county made to assist father with his case plan and reunite him with child. These efforts

included, among others, sobriety monitored by UAs; supervised visitation; referrals to inpatient treatment; transportation assistance and bus passes; assistance with phone services; referrals to parenting-education programs; a psychological evaluation; DBT; and a psychiatric medication assessment. The district court also determined that termination was in child's best interests. The district court therefore ordered the termination of father's parental rights to child.

Father appeals.

DECISION

A district court may terminate parental rights only for "grave and weighty reasons." *In re Welfare of M.D.O.*, 462 N.W.2d 370, 375 (Minn. 1990). A district court may involuntarily terminate parental rights if (1) reasonable efforts toward reunification were either made or were not required; (2) at least one of the statutory bases for terminating parental rights under Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b) (2024) exists; and (3) the proposed termination is in the child's best interests. Minn. Stat. §§ 260C.301, subds. 1(b), 7, 8, .317, subd. 1 (2024). The county bears the burden of proving grounds for termination, *In re Welfare of Child of H.G.D.*, 962 N.W.2d 861, 870 (Minn. 2021), and must do so by clear and convincing evidence, Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 58.03, subd. 2(a).

We "review the termination of parental rights to determine whether the district court's findings address the statutory criteria and whether the district court's findings are supported by substantial evidence and are not clearly erroneous." *In re Welfare of Child of S.E.P.*, 744 N.W.2d 381, 385 (Minn. 2008). "A finding is clearly erroneous if it is either manifestly contrary to the weight of the evidence or not reasonably supported by the

evidence as a whole.” *In re Welfare of Child. of T.R.*, 750 N.W.2d 656, 660-61 (Minn. 2008) (quotation omitted). We review a district court’s decision to terminate parental rights for an abuse of discretion. *In re Welfare of Child of R.D.L.*, 853 N.W.2d 127, 136-37 (Minn. 2014). “We will affirm a termination order if at least one statutory ground for termination is supported by clear and convincing evidence and termination is in the best interests of the child, so long as the [county] made reasonable efforts to reunite the family if reasonable efforts were required.” *In re Welfare of Child of F.F.N.M.*, 999 N.W.2d 525, 535 (Minn. App. 2023), *rev. denied* (Minn. Jan. 5, 2024).

Father challenges the district court’s determination on each of the statutory criteria for involuntary termination of parental rights: reasonable efforts by the county, the existence of at least one statutory ground for termination, and the child’s best interests. We address each argument in turn.

I. The district court did not abuse its discretion in determining that the county made reasonable efforts to rehabilitate father and reunify father with child.

Before terminating parental rights, a district court must specifically find that the county has made reasonable efforts to rehabilitate the parent and reunify the family or find that reasonable efforts are not statutorily required. Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 8; *T.R.*, 750 N.W.2d at 664. Reasonable efforts “must be aimed at alleviating the conditions that gave rise to out-of-home placement, and they must conform to the problems presented.” *In re Welfare of Child of J.K.T.*, 814 N.W.2d 76, 88 (Minn. App. 2012).

In determining whether a county’s efforts were reasonable, the district court must consider whether the services offered were:

- (1) selected in collaboration with the child’s family and, if appropriate, the child;
- (2) tailored to the individualized needs of the child and child’s family;
- (3) relevant to the safety, protection, and well-being of the child;
- (4) adequate to meet the individualized needs of the child and family;
- (5) culturally appropriate;
- (6) available and accessible;
- (7) consistent and timely; and
- (8) realistic under the circumstances.

Minn. Stat. § 260.012(h) (2024). “[W]hat constitutes reasonable efforts depends on the facts of each case.” *In re Welfare of Child of J.H.*, 968 N.W.2d 593, 601 (Minn. App. 2021) (quotation omitted), *rev. denied* (Minn. Dec. 6, 2021). We review the district court’s determination about the reasonableness of the county’s efforts for an abuse of discretion and the related findings of fact for clear error. *In re Welfare of Child of D.L.D.*, 865 N.W.2d 315, 321-22 (Minn. App. 2015), *rev. denied* (Minn. July 20, 2015).

The district court ruled that the county made reasonable efforts to correct the conditions that led to child’s out-of-home placement and that father “failed to honestly engage with the offered services.” The district court noted that many of the county’s services were offered to father when the proceedings began in 2023 and that the county maintained these services, despite father’s “unwillingness to work with and aggressive behavior towards [county] employees.” The district court found that these services included, among others: (1) UAs to demonstrate sobriety; (2) a chemical-health assessment; (3) transportation assistance and bus passes; (4) assistance with phone services; (5) a referral for a diagnostic assessment; (6) a referral for an expedited

psychological evaluation; (7) a referral for parenting-education services; (8) supervised visitation with child; and (9) a psychiatric medication assessment. The district court also found that the

services have been selected in collaboration with the child's family and, if appropriate, the child, tailored to the individualized needs of the child and child's family; relevant to the safety, protection, and well-being of the child[,] adequate to meet the individualized needs of the child and family, culturally appropriate, available, and accessible, consistent and timely, and realistic under the circumstances. *[Father] failed to honestly engage with the offered services. Indeed, he fought them the entire time, feeling that the [county] should meet him half way.*

(Emphasis added.)

On appeal, father appears to argue only that the county did not consistently provide services on time; those services were unavailable and inaccessible; and the requirement to engage in such services was not "realistic under the circumstances." Father appears to cabin this argument "to the mental health services offered by the [c]ounty, which did not commence until after [the psychologist] completed her evaluation of [f]ather in late October 2024." We conclude that the district court did not clearly err in its factual findings regarding the services made available by the county to father, and we also conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion when it determined that the county's efforts to rehabilitate father and reunify the family were reasonable.

Father appears to argue that the county is responsible for delaying the provision of mental-health services until after the psychological evaluation in October 2024. But father does not mention the timeline of events or his involvement in any delay in securing mental-

health services. The county became engaged in this case in August 2023 and confirmed father's paternity a few months later, in November. The social workers testified that they seldom provide mental-health services until an alleged parent is adjudicated as a parent. Father then disengaged from the county for five months, from December 2023 to May 2024. During that time, he refused to participate in services and had minimal contact with the county. Upon re-engaging with the county, it worked to secure a psychological evaluation for father. But, because of wait times, an evaluation was not immediately available. Still, the county worked with its internal psychologist to schedule a psychological evaluation at a "special" time for father. That evaluation occurred in early October 2024, and the report was completed later that month. And father obtained a diagnostic assessment in July 2024, while waiting for the psychological evaluation.

Accordingly, substantial evidence supports the district court's findings that the county made reasonable efforts to reunify the child and father. As explained above, the county provided mental-health services to father on a schedule consistent with their practices. But father withdrew from the county and refused to participate in his case plan for around five months. The district court's findings related to the county's provision of mental-health services in a timely, accessible, and realistic manner are not clearly erroneous, and the district court did not abuse its discretion by determining that the county's actions were reasonable.

II. Clear and convincing evidence establishes at least two statutory grounds to terminate father's parental rights.

Father also argues that we should reverse the district court's decision terminating his parental rights because none of the four statutory grounds found by the district court are supported by the record. We disagree.

To terminate parental rights, a district court must find at least one statutory ground to involuntarily terminate parental rights. Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b) (listing statutory bases to involuntarily terminate parental rights). When reviewing a district court's determination that the county has established one or more statutory grounds, we "review the district court's findings of the underlying or basic facts for clear error, but we review its determination of whether a particular statutory basis for involuntarily terminating parental rights is present for an abuse of discretion." *In re Welfare of Child. of J.R.B.*, 805 N.W.2d 895, 901 (Minn. App. 2011), *rev. denied* (Minn. Jan. 6, 2012). If we affirm the district court's decision that one statutory ground to involuntarily terminate parental rights is present, we need not address whether the other statutory grounds are supported by the record. *See J.K.T.*, 814 N.W.2d at 92 (recognizing that appellate courts "need only one properly supported statutory ground in order to affirm a termination order").

The district court determined that the county proved by clear and convincing evidence that four separate statutory grounds supported termination of father's parental rights: (1) father substantially, continuously, or repeatedly failed to comply with the duties imposed on him by the parent and child relationship; (2) father is palpably unfit to parent

child; (3) despite the county’s reasonable efforts, father failed to correct the condition leading to the child’s out-of-home placement; and (4) child is neglected and in foster care. *See* Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b)(2), (3), (4), (7).

We limit our analysis to the first and third statutory grounds found by the district court because the record contains clear and convincing evidence supporting termination on those grounds. *See id.*, subd. 1(b)(2), (4).

Failure to comply with the duties of the parent-child relationship.

Parental rights may be terminated if “the parent has substantially, continuously, or repeatedly refused or neglected to comply with the duties imposed upon that parent by the parent and child relationship.” Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b)(2). Such duties include providing food, clothing, shelter, education, and other care and control necessary for healthy child development. *Id.* “The district court must also determine that, at the time of termination, the parent is not presently able and willing to assume [those] responsibilities and that the condition will continue for the reasonably foreseeable future.” *In re Welfare of Child of A.M.C.*, 920 N.W.2d 648, 655 (Minn. App. 2018); *see also In re Welfare of S.Z.*, 547 N.W.2d 886, 893 (Minn. 1996) (instructing the district court to “address conditions that exist at the time of the hearing”).

The district court determined that father did not comply with his case plan. The district court specifically found that father did not: maintain absolute sobriety, participate in parenting-education programming, demonstrate his ability to maintain safe and stable housing, participate in visitation, sign all releases, remain law-abiding, or engage in certain anger-management programming. “Failure to satisfy requirements of a court-ordered case

plan provides evidence of a parent's noncompliance with the duties and responsibilities under section 260C.301, subdivision 1(b)(2).” *In re Welfare of Child. of K.S.F.*, 823 N.W.2d 656, 666 (Minn. App. 2012).

We conclude that the district court's finding that father substantially, continuously, or repeatedly refused or neglected to comply with the duties imposed on him by the parent-child relationship are supported by the record and not clearly erroneous. Further, those findings of fact support the district court's determination that father actually did substantially, continuously, or repeatedly refuse or neglect to comply with the duties imposed on him by the parent-child relationship. Thus, the district court's determination that father failed to satisfy the duties of the parent-child relationship is contrary to neither logic nor the facts found by the district court. Accordingly, we conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion in determining that clear and convincing evidence supports this statutory basis for involuntarily terminating father's parental rights. The record reflects that father's UAs routinely tested positive for alcohol and THC, including between trial dates; father was removed from a parenting program after an argument with another member; father testified that he completed a separate parenting program but could not remember many details about the program and his social worker at the time was unaware father had completed the program; father did not consistently participate in visitation with child, especially when he withdrew from contact with the county and refused visitation with child for five months; father did not sign all releases of information; and father had several encounters with law enforcement, including several restraining orders, at least one alcohol-related driving offense, and credit card fraud.

To convince us otherwise, father argues that he had a home; provided mostly suitable food for child; was financially stable; his “past or present criminal history had no bearing on his ability to physically or financially provide for [c]hild”; and the reunification plan did not address his ability to physically and financially support child’s needs. But these circumstances do not establish that father complied with the duties of the parent-child relationship. The record indeed appears to support father’s assertion that he had a home, provided mostly suitable food for child, and was either financially stable or that his finances were managed by someone else. But the county’s efforts “must be aimed at alleviating the conditions that gave rise to out-of-home placement, and they must conform to the problems presented.” *J.K.T.*, 814 N.W.2d at 88. That the county did not consider father’s ability to financially care for child’s needs does not mean that the county failed its duty, given that the county identified other concerns associated with father’s ability to care for child. *See S.Z.*, 547 N.W.2d at 892 (noting that whether the county provided reasonable efforts is context-specific and “depends on the problem presented”). Father’s evidence regarding his ability to financially provide for the child does not negate his inability to comply with the *other* identified requirements to adequately care for the child.

And we disagree with father that his criminal history is irrelevant in assessing this factor. While father’s criminal history alone might not justify termination of his parental rights, the case plan included an express requirement that he remain law-abiding. *See In re Child of Simon*, 662 N.W.2d 155, 162 (Minn. App. 2003) (noting that the court may consider “the fact of incarceration in conjunction with other evidence supporting the petition for termination”). Father’s inability to comply with the case plan in this regard is

evidence of his failure to comply with the duties of the parent-child relationship. *See K.S.F.*, 823 N.W.2d at 666 (noting that the failure to adhere to requirements in a case plan is evidence of noncompliance with the statutory ground for termination).

Failure to correct conditions leading to out-of-home placement.

A district court may terminate parental rights if “following the child’s placement out of the home, reasonable efforts, under the direction of the court, have failed to correct the conditions leading to the child’s placement.” Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 1(b)(4). It is presumed that reasonable efforts have failed upon a showing that: (1) a child under the age of eight “has resided out of the parental home under court order for six months unless the parent has maintained regular contact with the child and the parent is complying with the [case] plan”; (2) “the court has approved the [case] plan”; (3) the “conditions leading to the out-of-home placement have not been corrected,” which is presumed when the parent has “not substantially complied with the court’s orders and a reasonable case plan”; and (4) “reasonable efforts have been made by the [county] to rehabilitate the parent and reunite the family.” *Id.*, subd. 1(b)(4)(i)-(iv).

The district court found that each of these four factors were satisfied because: (1) child was in out-of-home placement for over 500 days at the time of trial and father has not maintained regular contact with child; (2) the district court approved father’s case plan and ordered him to follow it; (3) father failed to substantially comply with the plan by not maintaining absolute sobriety, not engaging in consistent visitation with child, and failing to remain law-abiding, for example; and (4) the county made reasonable efforts to rehabilitate father and reunite the family, which included a referral to parental-education

programming, UAs to demonstrate absolute sobriety, a diagnostic assessment and a psychological evaluation, and many opportunities for visitation both in and out of his home.

As already discussed, we conclude that the district court's ruling that the county made reasonable efforts is supported by substantial evidence and is not clearly erroneous. And we also conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion in determining that this statutory basis for involuntarily terminating father's parental rights was present.

Father argues that (1) "the frayed relationship between the [a]gency and him . . . was used to overshadow [his] progress" related to parenting classes and individual therapy, and (2) his progress in other areas of his case plan, despite the complicated relationship he had with the county, means that "he made sufficient progress on his case plan . . . to constitute substantial compliance." We are not convinced.

The record shows that father has not substantially complied with his case plan and has not corrected the conditions leading to out-of-home placement. For example, the county noted father's substance-use history and present use as a concern over child's placement. Father has not maintained absolute sobriety, and the UAs submitted during father's trial tested positive for alcohol. The record also shows that father has not maintained regular visitation with child, inconsistently signed releases of information for service providers, and has not been law-abiding. Father also did not complete a parenting program, as required by his case plan. Father testified that after his removal from the Circles of Security program, he completed an eight-week parenting class in Wisconsin. But he could not remember his instructor's name and offered no proof that he had completed the program. The district court did not find father's testimony credible. *See In*

re Welfare of T.D., 731 N.W.2d 548, 555 (Minn. App. 2007) (stating “[w]e defer to the district court’s determinations of witness credibility”), *rev. denied* (Minn. July 17, 2007).

Even if father had substantially complied with his case plan, such substantial compliance “may not be enough to avoid termination of parental rights when the record contains clear and convincing evidence supporting termination.” *J.K.T.*, 814 N.W.2d at 89. As noted in *J.K.T.*, “The critical issue is not whether the parent formally complied with the case plan, but rather whether the parent is presently able to assume the responsibilities of caring for the child.” *Id.* The record contains substantial evidence that, despite father’s “substantial compliance” with some parts of his case plan, he failed to comply with other requirements of the plan, including that he maintain absolute sobriety and remain law-abiding. Father consistently failed to submit UAs, many of his UAs tested positive for alcohol or THC, and father had several encounters with law enforcement during the pendency of this case.

In sum, we conclude that clear and convincing evidence supports the district court’s ruling that father failed to correct the conditions that led to child’s out-of-home placement following reasonable efforts by the county as required by section 260C.301, subdivision 1(b)(4). We also conclude that those findings are sufficient to support its determination that father failed to correct the conditions that led to child’s out-of-home placement under section 260C.301, subdivision 1(b)(4). Accordingly, the district court’s conclusion that father failed to correct the conditions that led to child’s out-of-home placement under section 260C.301, subdivision 1(b)(4), is contrary to neither logic nor the facts found by

the district court. Thus, the district court did not abuse its discretion in determining that termination of father's parental rights is supported by at least two statutory bases.

III. The district court did not abuse its discretion by determining that termination of father's parental rights was in child's best interests.

Even if a statutory basis for termination is present and the county has made reasonable efforts, the child's best interests are the "paramount consideration" in a termination proceeding. Minn. Stat. § 260C.301, subd. 7. A district court balances three factors when considering a child's best interests: (1) the child's interest in preserving the parent-child relationship; (2) the parent's interest in preserving the parent-child relationship; and (3) any competing interests of the child. Minn. R. Juv. Prot. P. 58.04(c)(2)(ii). We review a district court's best-interests determination for an abuse of discretion, but we review the district court's findings of fact underlying that determination for clear error. *J.R.B.*, 805 N.W.2d at 905.

The district court made findings of fact on the best-interests factors supported by clear and convincing evidence and determined that termination was in child's best interests. The district court found: (1) "child is currently placed in a safe, stable, loving home"; (2) "the relative foster parent has demonstrated an ability to meet the child's needs"; (3) "child has made significant developmental strides while in the resource parent's care"; (4) father has failed to address his behavioral and substance-use issues; (5) father continues to struggle; (6) father refuses to engage with the county; (7) when father engages with the county, he does so dishonestly; (8) father blames others rather than focusing on improving

himself; (9) father “has shown minimal honest improvement”; and (10) father “has not demonstrated his interest in preserving the parent-child relationship.”

The record supports each of these findings supporting termination. The record shows that child’s needs are elevated, child has been in out-of-home placement for over 500 days, and that permanency with child’s relatives will likely provide a stable and safe home. Father failed to address his substance-use issues, as shown by his consistent noncompliance with submitting to UAs and positive test results.

Father argues that his interactions with the psychologist and involvement in therapy “preclude[s] a finding” that termination is in the child’s best interests. We initially note that a ruling regarding whether termination is in the best interests of a child is not a finding of fact. *See J.R.B.*, 805 N.W.2d at 905 (distinguishing the district court’s determination of whether termination of parental rights is in a child’s best interests—which is reviewed for an abuse of discretion—from its findings of the facts that underlie that discretionary decision—which findings of fact are reviewed for clear error). Even ignoring this misapprehension, father cites no authority supporting that argument. *See In re Welfare of Child of D.L.D.*, 771 N.W.2d 538, 545 n.2 (Minn. App. 2009) (noting that an inadequately briefed issue is deemed waived). Father’s visitation notes appear to show appropriate and safe parenting between him and child. But the district court determined that the overwhelming evidence in the record supports the findings of fact in support of the conclusion that termination is in child’s best interests. *See J.H.*, 968 N.W.2d at 601 n.6 (“[U]nder the clear-error standard, we may not reweigh evidence, engage in fact-finding, or reconcile conflicting evidence.”).

Even so, father does not account for the balancing required of the district court in determining the best interests of child. “Balancing [the interests of the parent and child] . . . is an active process of determining the weight of two potentially opposing interests rather than a static attribution of an equal weight to each interest.” *In re Welfare of R.T.B.*, 492 N.W.2d 1, 4 (Minn. App. 1992) (quotation omitted). On review, we will not reweigh the evidence or substitute our judgment for that of the district court. *Sefkow v. Sefkow*, 427 N.W.2d 203, 210 (Minn. 1988); *see also Vangsness v. Vangsness*, 607 N.W.2d 468, 477 (Minn. App. 2000) (noting that the law “leaves scant if any room for an appellate court to question the [district] court’s balancing of best-interests considerations”). Therefore, because the record supports the district court’s findings on the best-interests factors, and because the district court’s balancing of its findings on those factors carefully weighed the competing interests of child and father, we discern no abuse of discretion in the district court’s determination that child’s best interests favor termination.

Father has not shown that the district court abused its discretion in any of its rulings on the prerequisites for involuntary termination of his parental rights—reasonable efforts to reunite the family, the existence of a statutory basis to terminate parental rights, and the best interests of the child. We therefore conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion by terminating father’s parental rights to child.

Affirmed.