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SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
APPELLATE DIVISION
DOCKET NO. A-1959-14T1

NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF CHILD PROTECTION AND PERMANENCY,

Plaintiff-Respondent,

v.

L.J.P.,

Defendant-Appellant.

IN THE MATTER OF P.R.,

Minor.

Submitted May 16, 2016 – Decided June 17, 2016

Before Judges Messano and Gooden Brown.

On appeal from the Superior Court of New Jersey, Chancery Division, Family Part, Cumberland County, Docket No. FN-06-89-14.

Joseph E. Krakora, Public Defender, attorney for appellant (Stephania Saienni-Albert, Designated Counsel, on the brief).

Robert Lougy, Acting Attorney General, attorney for respondent (Melissa H. Raksa, Assistant Attorney General, of counsel; Amanda DeVault, Deputy Attorney General, on the brief).

Joseph E. Krakora, Public Defender, Law Guardian, attorney for minor (Olivia Belfatto Crisp, Assistant Deputy Public Defender, on the brief).

PER CURIAM

Defendant L.J.P.[1] appeals from the Family Part's November 13, 2014 order finding that she abused or neglected her four-year-old daughter, P.R., by inflicting excessive corporal punishment.[2] Defendant argues that there was insufficient evidence to establish abuse by a preponderance of the evidence. The Division of Child Protection and Permanency (Division) and the child's Law Guardian join in opposing the appeal. Having considered the parties' arguments in light of the record and applicable legal standards, we affirm.

I.

We derive the following facts from the record. On December 30, 2013, at approximately 11:25 p.m., Division caseworkers, Luis Negron (Negron) and Hykeemah Arrick (Arrick), responded to the New Jersey State Police Barracks in Bridgeton on a report of child physical abuse. State troopers had transported four-year-old P.R., defendant, and other household members to police headquarters before making the referral to the Division. Upon arrival, Arrick interviewed P.R. and Negron interviewed defendant.

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[1] Initials are used to protect the privacy of those involved. See R. 1:38-3(d)(12).

[2] P.R.'s father, C.R., was not accused of abuse or neglect. He was named solely as a dispositional party.

P.R. told Arrick that her mother "punched [her] on both sides of [her] face." P.R. described her mother's hand as being open and stated that this was not the first time that her mother had hit her. P.R. had a "busted lip and severe dark purple bruising all around her eyes and cheeks on both sides of her face, on both ears, and all across her neck."

Defendant, who had no history with the Division, told Negron that P.R. had spilled food under the table. After cleaning up the food, she took P.R. to the side porch of the house where she "spanked" her on the buttocks and then "popped" her in the mouth for saying something "smart," although defendant could not recall P.R.'s exact statement. Defendant denied causing any marks or bruises on P.R. and stated that P.R. was bleeding because she bit her lip.

Defendant admitted taking prescribed medications for various medical conditions, including multiple sclerosis (MS), vertigo, anxiety, and depression. She also admitted having a history of alcohol abuse and experimenting with crack cocaine several years before P.R.'s birth. However, defendant denied being under the influence of any illicit substance at the time of the incident.

Defendant told Negron that she and P.R. lived with her boyfriend, his eight-year-old son, her boyfriend's sister and

brother-in-law, E.P. and M.P., and the couple's three children. P.R.'s father, C.R., resided in Pennsylvania. According to defendant, the police were called to the house by E.P., with whom defendant had a physical altercation over how defendant had disciplined P.R. for spilling the food.

State troopers advised Negron that defendant would be charged with assault and child endangerment.[3] The Division effected an emergency Dodd removal,[4] which was later approved by the Family Part. Before transporting P.R. from police headquarters to the hospital for a medical evaluation, the caseworkers went to the home to retrieve some of P.R.'s personal belongings. Upon arrival at the residence, Negron went into the house while the other caseworker remained in the car with P.R. Before leaving the residence, Negron was shown blood drops on the floor of the side porch where defendant reportedly hit P.R. While waiting in the car, P.R. reiterated to the caseworker that her mother had punched her in the mouth and both sides of her face for dropping food on the floor. When asked whether E.P. or

[3] Defendant's merits brief indicates that there is no record that defendant was ever convicted of these charges.

[4] Dodd removal refers to the emergency removal of a child from the home without a court order pursuant to the Dodd Act, named after its author, former Senate President Frank J. "Pat" Dodd. The Act, as amended, is found at N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21 to -8.82. See N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. P.W.R., 205 N.J. 17, 26 n.11 (2011).

M.P. had ever hit her, P.R. responded that E.P. had hit her in the face and M.P. had hit her on the buttocks. P.R. also stated that she was afraid of M.P. "because he yells at her."

Upon arrival at Inspira Medical Center in Vineland in the early morning hours of December 31, P.R. was examined, treated and administered a CT scan of the head and a chest x-ray. The CT scan showed "no acute intracranial abnormality and no skull fracture" and the chest x-ray was "within normal limits." Later that morning, an evaluation was conducted at the NJ CARES Institute[5] by Dr. Monique Higginbotham, during which P.R.'s injuries were photographed. After the evaluation, the Division placed P.R. in an approved resource home pending placement with her maternal aunt.[6]

At the fact-finding hearing conducted on November 13, 2014,[7] Dr. Higginbotham, who was qualified as an expert in pediatric

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[5] The NJ CARES Institute is a regional center for South Jersey where children are evaluated in connection with abuse and neglect allegations and provided with medical and mental health services.

[6] On January 8, 2014, the Division transferred P.R. from the resource placement to her maternal aunt, after the completion of a home assessment. P.R.'s father did not object to the placement because he had recently lost his job and was unable to financially provide for P.R. at that time. Defendant was permitted to have supervised visitation with P.R.

[7] On May 30, 2014, the scheduled fact-finding hearing was adjourned at the Division's request. The court accepted (continued)

child abuse,[8] and Negron testified on behalf of the State. In addition, the following documentary exhibits were admitted into evidence without objection: a redacted Division Investigation Summary dated December 30, 2013; Dr. Higginbotham's NJ CARES medical report dictated February 6, 2014; and NJ CARES photographs documenting P.R.'s injuries. Defendant did not testify or present any witnesses.

Negron's testimony was consistent with the redacted Division Investigation Summary that was admitted into evidence. Dr. Higginbotham testified that, preliminarily, she asked P.R. various questions about how she got her "boo-boo," and P.R. replied, "my mommy punched me in the mouth," and "I was bleeding on the porch [or floor], and my blood was coming out my mouth." When asked whether her mother had ever hit her with something else, P.R. responded "with a belt and her hand, right here and here and here," while pointing to various parts of her

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(continued)
defendant's stipulation to allegations of excessive corporal punishment and substance abuse pursuant to N.J.S.A. 30:4C-12 (Title 30), as pled in the Division's verified complaint, with the understanding that the Division would be proceeding with the Title 9 filing at a later date. Notwithstanding the pending Title 9 (FN) proceeding, P.R.'s father applied for and was granted physical custody of P.R. under a separate non-dissolution (FD) docket.

[8] Opposing counsel stipulated to Dr. Higginbotham's qualifications.

body. P.R. also stated that E.P. and M.P. had also hit her with a belt.

Dr. Higginbotham's evaluation revealed that P.R. had sustained "multiple bruises to her face, around the eyes, the cheeks, the chin, [and] the jaw" as well as "bruises of her mouth, her lips, and the tissue inside of the lips." Dr. Higginbotham also observed bruising on P.R.'s ears and neck. While testifying, Dr. Higginbotham described the photographs that were admitted into evidence depicting the injuries P.R. sustained. Beginning with P.R.'s eyes, Dr. Higginbotham testified:

> She had bruises around both eyes, particularly on the lower eyelids, but also on the left upper eyelid. And, the type of bruise, it's called petechiae. And, that's a special type of bruise. It's very tiny, like pinpoint size little dots, that she had on both lower eyelids.
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> And then, she had bruising to her right and left cheeks. The bruising on the left cheek was on the upper part of the cheek. The bruising on the right cheek extended to her lower jaw . . . near the chin. . . .
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> The right . . . cheek was also swollen that day that I saw her.

According to Dr. Higginbotham, the bruising to P.R.'s right ear was "very peculiar" because:

> [T]here's only a few ways that it [could] happen. And, one of those ways is if a child is struck in the side of the head and the

> ear hits the skull bone behind it; and, it can bruise the ear. The other way is if the ear is just pulled or twisted. So when you see ear bruising it's . . . usually an inflicted injury. It very rarely occurs accidentally.

In addition, Dr. Higginbotham reported "extensive injury" to P.R.'s mouth, "particularly on the inside of the lips," and testified:

> [O]n her upper lip . . . there's a little piece of tissue . . . called the frenulum; and, it's the piece of tissue that attaches your upper lip to your gum line. And, that's bruised, too. And, when you see that piece of tissue bruised . . . it's most often from some kind of impact to the mouth . . . . And, in fact, in the history she said that her mouth was bleeding, and the injuries support what she said in the history.

Dr. Higginbotham concluded that P.R.'s injuries were caused by physical abuse, stating:

> [M]ultiple planes of [P.R.'s] head [ ] were injured. And, there . . . isn't an explanation as to how this could have occurred accidentally, in a single fall. It couldn't be accidental. It would be really hard to explain how all that bruising and injury would happen accidentally. And, my conclusion was physical abuse. And, I came to that conclusion from the history [P.R.] provided and the physical exam findings . . . .

Dr. Higginbotham opined that all of P.R.'s injuries were sustained from the same incident. In addition, when asked on cross-examination whether P.R.'s injuries were consistent with

being hit with an "open hand" as P.R. had reported to the caseworker, Dr. Higginbotham responded:

> It could be. It could be that she was hit with an open hand, rather than a fist. I think what's more important in this case is number of impacts that she had to have had, whether or not it was an open or a closed hand.
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> There was impact to her eyes, which you could do with the fist, or a back [hand], or slapping forcefully. Same for the injuries to her face and mouth. If you punch, or backhand, or slap, you could . . . use similar amounts of force and cause the same type of injury.

When asked on cross-examination whether P.R. complained of pain during the evaluation, Dr. Higginbotham responded that "she didn't complain of pain that day" but "she winced" when Dr. Higginbotham touched her face. Dr. Higginbotham's written report, which was admitted into evidence, also indicated:

> These injuries would have caused [P.R.] severe pain, and this incident must have been terrifying to her . . . .
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> [P.R.'s] history and physical exam findings are indicative of child physical abuse. . . . [P.R.] is at risk for adverse emotional and mental health sequelae as a result of the physical abuse she experienced. I recommend [P.R.] begin trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for physical abuse . . . . Combined parent-child counseling for physical abuse may also be considered.

Following the testimony, the court found both of the Division's witnesses to be credible. After noting that the

family had no prior history with the Division and rendering a lengthy factual recitation of the evidence, the court ultimately determined that, "[t]he Division ha[d] established, by a preponderance of the evidence, that [defendant] failed to exercise a minimum degree of care, and that she inflicted excessive corporal punishment upon her child, which caused the child some harm." After recounting Dr. Higginbotham's testimony at length, the court stated:

> So, the conclusion was that the child had several impacts to her face, both sides, both ears, the jaw area, and her mouth; and, that this was the result of physical abuse.
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> Doctor Higginbotham was confident that all injuries occurred at the same time. She did not observe different stages of healing. It didn't matter to her whether the injuries occurred by open or a closed hand; the result could be the same.

In evaluating the proofs, the court acknowledged that the question is whether the injuries inflicted on the child were the result of a failure to exercise a minimum degree of care. In rejecting defendant's attorney's argument that "this was a one-time incident," that "an open hand was used," and that there was "no basis for the [c]ourt to conclude that all of the injuries, such as those to the child's neck were caused by the child being slapped in the face by her mother," the court concluded:

> In this regard, I rely heavily upon Dr. Higginbotham's testimony that there were

> multiple impacts to this child's face and neck area, causing the extensive injuries noted by her. This went beyond a mother slapping a child in the face, over frustration about something the child said, or did, or didn't do. For whatever reason, [defendant], totally exceeded what would have been an appropriate way to deal with this child spilling the food, and then saying something smart, if that's, in fact, what occurred.

Referencing N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c)(4)(b), the court reasoned that:

> This section of the statute does not require that there be long-lasting or significant harm to the child. So, the fact that the child did not express that she was in pain and did not have permanent injuries, is not dispositive.
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> Her injuries, as described by Dr. Higginbotham and in the photograph are sufficient. And, the Court finds that [defendant] did, in fact, abuse or neglect her child, pursuant to Title [9] . . . .

In accordance with the court's finding, defendant's name was to be placed on the state Child Abuse Registry (Registry) and the Title 9 litigation was terminated.[9] On December 24, 2014, defendant filed a Notice of Appeal and this appeal followed.

[9] Following the ruling, the court entered an order terminating the FN litigation with the consent of the parties, and P.R. was allowed to remain in the physical custody of her father under the prior non-dissolution filing. Defendant was ordered to complete substance abuse counseling and was permitted to have unsupervised contact with P.R. as arranged by P.R.'s father.

II.

On appeal, defendant argues that the finding of abuse within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c)(4)(b) is not supported by the evidence and the judge thereby erred in ordering the inclusion of her name on the Registry. Our scope of review on appeal is narrow. "'[F]indings by the trial judge are considered binding on appeal when supported by adequate, substantial and credible evidence'" in the record. N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. Z.P.R., 351 N.J. Super. 427, 433 (App. Div. 2002) (quoting Rova Farms Resort, Inc. v. Investors Ins. Co. of Am., 65 N.J. 474, 484 (1974)). We owe particular deference to a Family Part judge's fact-finding "[b]ecause of the Family Part's special jurisdiction and expertise in family matters . . . ." N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. T.M., 399 N.J. Super. 453, 463 (App. Div. 2008) (citing Cesare v. Cesare, 154 N.J. 394, 413 (1998)). Even where there are alleged errors in the trial court's evaluation of underlying facts, a reviewing court "will accord deference unless the trial court's findings went so wide of the mark that a mistake must have been made." N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. M.M., 189 N.J. 261, 279 (2007) (citations and internal quotations omitted). When the issue presented turns on a legal conclusion derived from the family court's factual findings, however, this court

accords no deference. N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. A.R., 419 N.J. Super. 538, 542-43 (App. Div. 2011).

Abuse and neglect cases are fact sensitive and "[e]ach case requires careful, individual scrutiny" as many cases are "idiosyncratic." N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. P.W.R., 205 N.J. 17, 33 (2011). The burden is on the Division to prove abuse or neglect by a preponderance of the "competent, material and relevant evidence[.]" N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.46(b); see also N.J. Dep't of Children & Families, Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. A.L., 213 N.J. 1, 22 (2013).

N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c) provides that a child under the age of eighteen is "abused or neglected" when his or her:

> [P]hysical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as the result of the failure of his parent or guardian . . . to exercise a minimum degree of care . . . (b) in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or substantial risk thereof, including the infliction of excessive corporal punishment; or by any other acts of a similarly serious nature requiring the aid of the court.
>
> [N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c)(4)(b).]

A parent "fails to exercise a minimum degree of care when he or she is aware of the dangers inherent in a situation and fails adequately to supervise the child or recklessly creates a risk of serious injury to that child." G.S. v. Dep't of Human

Servs., Div. of Youth & Family Servs., 157 N.J. 161, 181 (1999). Thus, it is "grossly or wantonly negligent, but not necessarily intentional," conduct that falls below the "minimum degree of care" required to hold the parent liable. Id. at 178.

The essence of gross or wanton negligence is that it "implies that a person has acted with reckless disregard for the safety of others." G.S., supra, 157 N.J. at 179. The G.S. Court determined that conduct is willful or wanton if the actor has "knowledge that injury is likely to, or probably will, result" and "can apply to situations ranging from 'slight inadvertence to malicious purpose to inflict injury.'" Id. at 178 (quoting McLaughlin v. Rova Farms, Inc., 56 N.J. 288, 305 (1970)). If the act or omission that causes injury is done intentionally, "whether the actor actually recognizes the highly dangerous character of her conduct is irrelevant," and "[k]nowledge will be imputed to the actor." Ibid. Such knowledge is imputed "[w]here an ordinary reasonable person would understand that a situation poses dangerous risks and acts without regard for the potentially serious consequences . . . ." Id. at 179.

Also, "[o]ne act may be substantial or the sum of many acts may be substantial" to prove abuse or neglect. N.J. Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. V.T., 423 N.J. Super. 320, 330 (App.

Div. 2011) (citation and internal quotations omitted). However, if an isolated act "appears to be aberrational," labeling the parent a child abuser may be inappropriate. N.J. Dep't of Children & Families, Div. of Youth & Family Servs. v. K.A., 413 N.J. Super. 504, 512-13 (App. Div. 2010), appeal dismissed, 208 N.J. 355 (2011). See also N.J.A.C. 10:129-7.5(b)(3) (recognizing the isolated or aberrational nature of the conduct as a mitigating factor when determining if abuse or neglect is established).

Excessive corporal punishment is not defined in Title 9. However, this court has approved the following jury charge on the issue: "The law does not prohibit the use of corporal punishment. The statute prohibits the infliction of excessive corporal punishment. The general proposition is that a parent may inflict moderate correction such as is reasonable under the circumstances of a case." K.A., supra, 413 N.J. Super. at 510 (quoting State v. T.C., 347 N.J. Super. 219, 239-40 (App. Div. 2002), certif. denied, 177 N.J. 222 (2003)). In addition, the Division's regulations offer some guidance on excessive corporal punishment by identifying "the types of injuries or risk or harm that may be abuse or neglect" as including "cuts, bruises, abrasions, welts or oral injuries," as well as "mental or emotional impairment." N.J.A.C. 10:129-2.2(a)(9), (12).

Defendant argues that the trial court erred in finding abuse because there was insufficient evidence of excessive corporal punishment. Defendant asserts that her "acts were not excessive or unreasonable under the circumstances . . . [and that] the discipline was an appropriate response" given her status as a single mother who suffered from various medical conditions. We disagree. Substantial credible evidence exists in this record to support the finding that defendant abused P.R. by repeatedly striking her in the face with such severity as to cause the injuries described by Dr. Higginbotham in her testimony, detailed in her report, and depicted in her photographs.

Defendant relies on P.W.R. and K.A. to support her argument that her conduct did not constitute child abuse. We cannot agree. P.W.R. is distinguishable because it involved a mother occasionally slapping her sixteen-year-old stepdaughter in the face as a form of discipline, leaving no marks or bruises. In reversing the finding of abuse and neglect, the Court determined that there was no evidence of "bruises, scars, lacerations, fractures, or any other medical ailment suffered as a result of [defendant's] actions" and the Division itself "found the allegation of physical abuse to be unfounded." P.W.R., supra, 205 N.J. at 35-36. Here, defendant repeatedly struck four-year-

old P.R. in the face, causing extensive bruising, swelling, bleeding and pain.

Defendant overly generalizes the Court's holding in P.W.R., arguing that, based on that decision, the "occasional slapping of [a] child in the face as a form of discipline [i]s not 'excessive' corporal punishment." On the contrary, while disapproving of such behavior, the Court narrowly opined that, "[a] slap in the face of a teenager as a form of discipline — with no resulting bruising or marks — does not constitute 'excessive corporal punishment' within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c)(4)(b)." Id. at 36. Here, P.R. was only four years old and sustained multiple impacts to her head, face and neck with sufficient force to cause bleeding, bruising and swelling. What may not be excessive corporal punishment for an older child may constitute "excessive corporal punishment in another setting" involving a younger child. Id. at 33.

K.A. is also distinguishable because it involved an aberrational situation in which a harried mother, dealing alone with extraordinary stress, in response to the child's repeated disobedience, momentarily lost control and struck her eight-year-old autistic daughter four or five times on the shoulder with a closed fist, causing several bruises. K.A., supra, 413 N.J. Super. at 512-13. The child had disobeyed her mother's

repeated instructions to complete her homework after school, prompting her mother to respond initially by sending her daughter to her room for a time-out. Id. at 505-06. The mother was overwhelmed in caring for the child because the child's father worked or was otherwise unavailable until midnight every night, her extended family resided in India and she had not formed any friendships in this country. Id. at 506-07. In finding no excessive corporal punishment, we considered those extenuating circumstances. We also considered the fact that the mother did not lacerate the child's skin, the child did not require medical intervention, and the visible bruises did not expose the child to further harm if left untreated. Id. at 512.

In contrast, here, there is no evidence that P.R. suffered from a developmental or behavioral disorder. Further, P.R.'s injuries were "located on multiple planes of her head, face, mouth, and neck," and were "indicative of multiple impacts," resulting in bleeding, bruising and swelling and necessitating "trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy" to address the ensuing "adverse emotional and mental health sequelae." Moreover, the physical abuse was sufficiently egregious that P.R. was removed from the home to avoid further harm, whereas the child in K.A. remained in the home because "[t]he Division did not at any time believe that removal . . . was necessary to

protect her from further harm." K.A., supra, 413 N.J. Super. at 513.

Likewise, we reject defendant's contention that P.R.'s "inappropriate verbal response" and act of dropping food on the floor warranted such a severe disciplinary response. While P.R.'s behavior is commonplace for a child of her age, defendant's response was not reasonable under the circumstances. Indeed, defendant failed to utilize alternative disciplinary measures, such as a time-out, before hitting her daughter and had the assistance of three adult household members, one of whom called the police in response to defendant's use of excessive corporal punishment on P.R.

Further, although this was the Division's first referral with the family, P.R.'s repeated statements that defendant, E.P., and M.P. had all previously hit her suggested that this was not an aberrational or isolated occurrence. In any event, even if this was an isolated incident, that fact is not controlling. Rather, in K.A., we observed that a single incident of violence against a child may be sufficient to constitute excessive corporal punishment. Id. at 511. "[E]xcessive corporal punishment" as defined by common usage and understanding means "going beyond what is proper or reasonable," as defendant did here. Ibid.

Defendant also points to her status as a "single mother," suffering from "MS, vertigo, anxiety and depression," as circumstances mitigating her actions. Defendant's reliance on her medical condition and status as a single mother, notably with the assistance of three other adults in the household, constitute a futile attempt to mitigate the consequences of her actions. In K.A., this court sanctioned the examination of the mother's circumstances because of the absence of evidence that the injury inflicted constituted "per se excessive corporal punishment." K.A., supra, 413 N.J. Super. at 512. Here, based on Dr. Higginbotham's testimony, the court found that P.R.'s injuries were indicative of multiple impacts and extreme force, whether with an open hand or a closed fist. Clearly, such injuries evince the use of per se excessive corporal punishment on a four-year-old child. Thus, examination of defendant's circumstances is unnecessary to determine whether she inflicted excessive corporal punishment. Moreover, defendant's reliance on her participation in Division services and the ultimate termination of the FN proceeding are merely outcomes, not factors, in determining whether her actions constituted excessive corporal punishment at the time of the incident. See N.J. Div. of Child Prot. & Permanency v. E.D.-O., 223 N.J. 166, 195 (2015) (emphasizing that a parent's conduct should be

evaluated based on the statutory standard "rather than the lens of consequences of a finding of neglect . . . .").

Finally, defendant argues that her name should be removed from the Registry because her actions "did not rise to excessive corporal punishment as defined by the statute" and the inclusion "ruins [her] good name, and limits employment as a day care worker or in other education-related jobs." In light of our decision upholding the trial court's finding of abuse, defendant's argument must fail. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.11, reports of child abuse and neglect are forwarded to the Registry, which serves as a mandatory "repository of all information regarding child abuse or neglect that is accessible to the public pursuant to State and federal law." Moreover, "[t]he [R]egistry serves an important public function by assuring that adoption agencies, employers such as day care centers, and other organizations that deal with children are apprised of the harmful conduct that led a particular individual to be listed on the [R]egistry." Dep't of Children & Families, Div. of Child Prot. & Permanency v. G.R., 435 N.J. Super. 392, 403 (App. Div. 2014).

While this court has acknowledged that the inclusion of one's name on the Registry has "significant and longstanding adverse consequences[,] [s]trict adherence to the statutory

standards of N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21(c)(4) is important because the stakes are high for all parties concerned." N.J. Div. of Child Prot. & Permanency v. Y.N., 220 N.J. 165, 167 (2014); see also N.J. Div. of Child Prot. & Permanency v. K.N.S., 441 N.J. Super. 392, 402 (App. Div. 2015) (recognizing that the "[Registry] provides no opportunity for the rehabilitated and reformed individual ever to clear [his or her] name and reputation"). Here, given the finding of abuse that is amply supported by the substantial and credible evidence in the record, the inclusion of defendant's name on the Registry must stand.

Affirmed.