

2026 IL App (1st) 260308-U
No. 1-26-0308
Order filed October 30, 2026

NOTICE: This order was filed under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 23(b) and is not precedential except in the limited circumstances allowed under Rule 23(e)(1).

IN THE
APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS
FIRST DISTRICT, SIXTH DIVISION

In re D.P., a Minor.

(The People of the State of Illinois, Petitioner-Appellee,

v.

Paulin P., Respondent-Appellant).

Appeal from the Circuit Court of Cook County.
Honorable Kimberly D. Lewis, Judge, Presiding.
No. 24 JA 016

PRESIDING JUSTICE GAMRATH delivered the judgment of the court.
Justices Pucinski and Evans concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held:* Father's challenge to only one of three adjudication findings renders his appeal moot.

¶ 2 The State filed a petition for adjudication of wardship of minor D.P. based on allegations of neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse committed by her father, respondent Paulin P. Following an adjudication hearing, the circuit court found D.P. was neglected due to an injurious environment, abused due to a substantial risk of physical injury by both Paulin and her mother, and sexually abused by Paulin. Both parents were found unable to care for, protect, train, or discipline D.P., and guardianship was granted to the Illinois Department of Children and Family

Services (DCFS). Paulin appeals, challenging only the adjudicatory finding of sexual abuse. Pursuant to *In re V.S.*, 2025 IL 129755, ¶ 60, we deem his appeal moot and therefore dismiss.

¶ 3

I. BACKGROUND

¶ 4 The disturbing facts relating to Paulin’s abuse of D.P. are detailed in the briefs and the record. Because this case turns on the mootness doctrine, we need not describe them here. It is enough to say that the circuit court found D.P. was sexually abused by Paulin and that both parents inflicted abuse from a substantial risk of physical injury and neglect from an injurious environment. At the dispositional hearing, the court adjudged D.P. a ward of the court, found both parents unable to care for her, and placed her in DCFS’s guardianship. Paulin has appealed, but his appeal is moot.

¶ 5

II. ANALYSIS

¶ 6 On appeal, Paulin only challenges the court’s adjudicatory finding that he sexually abused D.P., leaving the additional abuse and neglect findings uncontested. As established by the Illinois Supreme Court in *In re V.S.*, 2025 IL 129755, ¶ 60, Paulin’s sole challenge to the sexual abuse finding renders his appeal moot.

¶ 7 The Act mandates a two-step process for determining if a minor should be made a ward of the court. The first step is the adjudication hearing, where the circuit court determines whether the minor is abused or neglected. 705 ILCS 405/2-21 (West 2024). The second step is the dispositional hearing, where the court determines “whether it is in the best interests of the minor and the public that the minor be made a ward of the court.” *Id.* §2-22(1).

¶ 8 In *V.S.*, the minor was adjudged both neglected and dependent, but the father only challenged the neglect finding on appeal. *V.S.*, 2025 IL 129755, ¶ 47. The supreme court held that the father’s sole challenge to the neglect finding rendered his appeal moot because a “single finding

of neglect, abuse, or dependency is enough to affirm the judgment of the circuit court.” *Id.* ¶ 58. Thus, where a neglect, abuse, or dependency finding remains unchallenged, “we need not review the appeal, as the remaining finding will still provide the grounds for wardship and any review would not offer effective relief.” *Id.*

¶ 9 V.S. is directly on point. Paulin does not challenge the additional findings of neglect due to injurious environment and abuse from substantial risk of physical injury. Thus, any review of the sexual abuse finding would have no impact on D.P.’s wardship, and no effective relief could be granted by our review. *Id.*; see also *In re R.J.*, 2026 IL App (1st) 252147, ¶ 32 (minors’ appeal was moot where the juvenile court “entered multiple findings of abuse and neglect, and only one such finding [was] being appealed”).

¶ 10 The collateral consequences exception to the mootness doctrine does not save Paulin’s appeal. The collateral consequences exception allows for appellate review where “collateral consequences survive the expiration or cessation of a court order that are likely to be redressed by a favorable judicial determination.” *In re Rita P.*, 2014 IL 115798, ¶ 31. Application of the collateral consequences exception is determined on a case-by-case basis. *Id.* ¶ 33. Collateral consequences must stem solely from the present adjudication and cannot be based on “vague, unsupported” statements about the future. *Id.* ¶ 33-34.

¶ 11 Paulin argues collateral consequences stem from the sexual abuse finding because (1) DCFS must retain the indicated report for 20 years (see 89 Ill. Adm. Code § 431.30(b)(2)(A)); (2) it triggers a mandatory report to the Illinois State Police under section 2-21(1) of the Juvenile Court Act (Act) (705 ILCS 405/2-21(1) (West 2024)); and (3) it carries “lasting social and professional stigma.” These contentions are too vague, unsupported, and speculative to have merit.

¶ 12 In *V.S.*, the court rejected the father’s similar argument that collateral consequences stemmed from him “not being able to challenge the indicated report” because the record was silent as to whether there even was an indicated report. *V.S.*, 2025 IL 129755, ¶ 65. Paulin argues his case is distinguishable because he was indicated for sexual molestation and DCFS must retain that report for 20 years. We fail to see how the mere retention of the indicated report has any real consequence or impact on Paulin. Indicated reports can only be disclosed to limited parties under limited circumstances. See Ill. Adm. Code 89 § 431.85. Paulin does not explain how the indicated report, or DCFS’s retention of that report, affects him now or in the foreseeable future.

¶ 13 Nor does Paulin face any consequence under section 2-21(1) of the Act, which requires abuse findings to be reported to the Illinois State Police and, in turn, disclosed to school districts conducting criminal background checks for prospective employees. See 705 ILCS 405/2-21(1) (West 2024); 105 ILCS 5/10-21.9 (West 2024); 105 ILCS 5/34-18.5 (West 2024). Paulin does not assert that he has applied for employment with a school district or intends to do so. Any impact from section 2-21(1) is therefore purely speculative. See *People v. Madison*, 2014 IL App (1st) 131950, ¶ 17 (no collateral consequence where defendant presented no indication she wished to own a firearm or pursue a licensed profession).

¶ 14 Likewise, any potential social or professional stigma is speculative. Juvenile records are sealed and “may never be disclosed to the general public or otherwise made widely available.” 705 ILCS 405/1-8(A) (West 2024). Because Paulin has not established the collateral consequences exception, or any other exception to mootness, his appeal is moot.

¶ 15 Appeal dismissed.