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FIFTH DIVISION  
November 20, 2017

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IN THE APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS  
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

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IN THE INTEREST OF M.R., A.F. & T.F., Minors,	)	Appeal from the
	)	Circuit Court of
(The People of the State of Illinois,	)	Cook County.
	)	
Petitioner-Appellee,	)	
	)	Nos. 15 JA 955, 16 JA 710,
v.	)	16 JA 711
	)	
NICHOLE R.,	)	The Honorable
	)	Peter Vilkelis,
Respondent-Appellant).	)	Judge Presiding.

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JUSTICE LAMPKIN delivered the judgment of the court.  
Presiding Justice Reyes and Justice Rochford concurred in the judgment.

**ORDER**

¶1 *HELD:* The evidence sufficiently supported a finding of neglect and abuse of the subject minors.

¶2 Respondent, Nichole R. (Nichole), appeals the trial court's adjudication orders finding the minors, M.R., A.F., and T.F., to be neglected due to an environment injurious to their welfare and abused due to a substantial risk of physical injury. The minors were adjudged wards of the court following a dispositional hearing. Respondent contends the trial court erred in allowing the

State to introduce inadmissible hearsay statements, which were relied upon at the adjudicatory hearing. Based on the following, we affirm.

¶3 FACTS

¶4 Respondent is the mother of minors, M.R., born on December 17, 2008, and twins A.F. and T.F., born on August 12, 2016.

¶5 On September 15, 2015, the State filed a petition for adjudication of wardship of M.R., alleging that she was neglected due to an injurious environment pursuant to section 2-3(1)(b) of the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 (Juvenile Act) (705 ILCS 405/2-3(1)(b) (West 2014)) and abused due to a substantial risk of physical injury pursuant to section 2-3(2)(ii) of the Juvenile Act (705 ILCS 405/2-3(2)(ii) (West 2014)). In the petition, the State claimed that M.R. was neglected and abused because her one-month-old brother, R.P., died in September 2015 and his death was ruled a homicide. The infant was taken to a hospital unresponsive and pronounced dead. He was diagnosed with a skull fracture and calcified rib fractures caused by child abuse. In addition, the petition alleged Nichole and her live-in boyfriend, Bobby F. (Bobby), had a prior indicated report for inadequate supervision and a history of domestic violence. The State's petition also stated that Nichole had been diagnosed with depression, but failed to take her prescribed medication for over one year.

¶6 On August 18, 2016, the State also filed petitions for adjudication of wardship for A.F. and T.F., alleging they were neglected due to an injurious environment pursuant to section 2-3(1)(b) of the Juvenile Act and abused due to a substantial risk of physical injury pursuant to section 2-3(2)(ii) of the Juvenile Act. The bases asserted to support the neglect and abuse allegations were the same as those in M.R.'s petition.

¶7 The trial court conducted a multi-day adjudicatory hearing beginning on March 20, 2017.

¶8 LaTonya Hale, an intact case manager for One Hope United, testified at the hearing. Hale stated that an intact case was created in July 2010 for respondent due to an allegation of abuse. Specifically, M.R. sustained a black eye while in Bobby's care. While the intact case remained active, M.R. lived with her maternal grandmother, Donna R. (Donna), and Nichole was allowed supervised visits. Hale recalled Nichole was present for some of the unannounced visits at Donna's home. Hale additionally recalled that, during a visit to M.R.'s daycare on December 6, 2011, Hale observed M.R. run to Nichole and hug her. Hale opined that M.R. and Nichole had a "good bond."

¶9 According to Hale, Nichole was deemed to have a "low functioning level" of a seven-year-old. Hale testified that Nichole required parenting counseling, a parent capacity assessment, and mental follow-up services. The parenting-capacity assessment was scheduled, but never completed, due to scheduling conflicts with the providing agency, which was later defunded. Nichole refused parenting and counseling services because Bobby refused to participate in services. Hale testified that Nichole had been medicated for underlying mental health concerns. As of April 2012, Nichole admitted she was supposed to take medication daily, but only remembered to take it once per week. Hale further testified that an assessment of Bobby revealed he required parenting and counseling services, but he refused to participate in said services.

¶10 Hale stated that the intact case was closed in August 2012 because Nichole agreed to Donna's guardianship of M.R. According to Hale, she would not have closed the intact case without that arrangement because of Nichole's low-level functioning and her inability to be attentive and keep M.R. safe.

¶11 The State called Bobby to testify. Bobby, however, invoked his fifth amendment rights against self-incrimination due to being a suspect in R.P.'s death.

¶12 Calumet Park Police Officer Joe Weisinger testified that, on March 4, 2015, he responded to a domestic battery call involving Nichole and Bobby. Nichole reported that Bobby choked her. Weisinger said he observed several scratches on Nichole's neck and called for an ambulance in response. Nichole, however, refused to sign a complaint against Bobby. Notwithstanding, Bobby was arrested because of the injuries inflicted upon Nichole, who was pregnant at the time. No children were present in the home during the incident.

¶13 Alicia McCree, a child protection specialist employed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), testified that she was assigned to investigate respondent in September 2015 following a report that a guest in her and Bobby's home had been inappropriately touched by Bobby's brother. On September 9, 2015, McCree proceeded to the home respondent shared with Bobby, M.R., and M.R.'s infant brother, R.P. Upon arriving at approximately 6 p.m., McCree learned that R.P. had died. McCree spoke to Nichole outside of the house at approximately 8 p.m. During their discussion, Nichole reported R.P. had been fine that day: she had fed him, he was changed, and Bobby placed him in his crib. Nichole stated that she left and returned home around 4 p.m. When she returned, she observed the front door was ajar despite having been locked when she left. Nichole proceeded to R.P.'s room and attempted to wake him by wiggling his foot or leg. R.P. was unresponsive, so Nichole called for Bobby. Nichole performed CPR, but R.P. never regained consciousness. McCree testified that Nichole was very sad and crying during their discussion.

¶14 McCree further stated that Nichole referred to M.R.'s father as "Tony" and reported he was not involved in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Nichole informed McCree that M.R. was not at the house and had been staying with Donna for the prior few days. Nichole additionally reported that M.R. was not enrolled in school despite being 6 years old. According to Nichole, she was having issues with the school district due to address verification. McCree testified that she discussed a safety plan with Nichole. Nichole acknowledged she had been diagnosed with depression prior to M.R.'s birth and had been prescribed medicine for the condition. Nichole, however, stated that she had not been on medication for over one year. McCree testified that the police interrupted her discussion with Nichole to instruct them to proceed to the police station.

¶15 While at the police station on September 9, 2015, McCree spoke to Bobby. Over respondent's counsel's objection, McCree testified regarding the discussion she had with Bobby. McCree stated that, according to Bobby, he was sitting on the couch with R.P. earlier that day and Nichole wanted to hold the baby. Bobby refused because it was his time to be with R.P. Bobby then took R.P. with him to the bathroom, at which time Nichole left the house. Bobby stated that, after finishing in the bathroom, he placed R.P. in his crib. R.P. was crying, so Bobby attempted to feed the baby. R.P. refused, but accepted a pacifier. Bobby stated that, after making eye contact with R.P., he left the room to take a shower. While showering, Nichole returned home and entered the bathroom. They engaged in a discussion and eventually left the bathroom together. Bobby observed the front door was ajar. He instructed Nichole to close the door. Bobby proceeded to sit on the couch when Nichole announced that something was wrong with R.P. Bobby responded by going to R.P.'s room and performing CPR. Bobby then called an ambulance while Nichole continued CPR. After the phone call, Bobby continued CPR.

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby also was excluded as the father of A.F. and T.F.

¶16 McCree testified that, following her investigation, the sexual abuse allegation was deemed unfounded.

¶17 Donna testified that she was Nichole's mother and M.R.'s grandmother. Donna stated that she helped her learning-disabled daughter raise M.R. until M.R. was four years old. According to Donna, Nichole and Bobby began dating when M.R. was one year old. Although Donna described Nichole and Bobby's relationship as "fine," she was concerned that Bobby hit Nichole. Donna averred "you don't know what sets him off. He might get physical again. I don't know." Donna stated Nichole had called her crying and reported that Bobby hit her. The last time Donna received such a call was while Nichole was pregnant with R.P. During that call, Nichole said Bobby was choking and hitting her. Donna added that, when M.R. was four years old, M.R. began living with Nichole and Bobby. M.R. reported to Donna that Bobby had hit Nichole. Before living with Nichole and Bobby, Donna acted as M.R.'s guardian because "every time [M.R. was] with [Bobby] or her mom she got hurt." On one occasion, after a visit, M.R. returned to Donna with a swollen eye. Nichole and Bobby explained that M.R. "got distracted because somebody called her a name and she fell up the stairs at Bobby's house." Donna was unable to recall how long she acted as M.R.'s guardian. Donna, however, recalled that M.R. was at her house, and had been for about one week, when R.P. died. Donna testified that Nichole and Bobby currently lived together. Donna expressed concern about M.R. being in Bobby's care because M.R. reported that he touched her. Donna never inquired further into the allegation.

¶18 Calumet Park Police Detective Mario Smith testified that he was assigned to investigate the death of R.P. The medic initially identified R.P.'s cause of death as sudden infant death syndrome. Detective Smith spoke to Bobby on September 9, 2015, at the police station. Respondent objected to the admission of that conversation. The trial court overruled

respondent's objection, stating the Juvenile Act was to be "interpreted broadly for me to ascertain facts to determine the situation with which these children find themselves." Bobby told Detective Smith he did not know what happened to R.P. Bobby explained that he and Nichole cared for R.P. in shifts. When it was his turn, Nichole and Bobby engaged in a small dispute. Nichole then left the house to go to the store. Bobby placed R.P. in his crib and proceeded to take a shower. Bobby reported hearing a door close while showering. Once he exited the shower, Bobby checked on R.P., who remained asleep. According to Bobby, when Nichole returned home and checked on R.P., R.P. was unresponsive.

¶19 Detective Smith testified that he learned the results of R.P.'s autopsy the following morning. More specifically, Detective Smith learned R.P. had a skull fracture on the right side of his head. The death investigation subsequently changed to a homicide investigation.

¶20 Later that day, on September 10, 2015, Detective Smith obtained a videotaped statement from Bobby. The videotape was admitted into evidence over respondent's objection. In his statement, Bobby said he and Nichole had been together for five or six years. He admitted to hitting Nichole during an incident, but explained that she provoked him by throwing something at him. Bobby stated that R.P. was not born with any known health issues, but he suspected something was wrong with the baby because he coughed and cried at the same time. According to Bobby, they had various visitors in their home, but none during the two weeks prior to R.P.'s death. Bobby reported that, on one occasion in the past month, M.R. provided R.P. milk that was too hot resulting in R.P. sustaining a burn to his lip. Bobby also reported suspecting R.P. had hit his lip on his crib and injured himself.

¶21 According to Bobby's statement, on the day R.P. died, the baby had been crying throughout the day. Bobby attempted to console R.P. by feeding him and putting him in his crib,

but the baby continued to cry. Bobby said he then gave R.P. a pacifier, kissed his forehead, and left R.P.'s room to take a shower. Bobby could hear R.P.'s continued cries during the shower. Bobby checked on R.P. after the shower and R.P. ceased crying. During the events described, Nichole had not been home. When she returned home, she reported that the front door had been ajar despite having closed it when she left. Bobby instructed Nichole to close the door.

¶22 In his statement, Bobby said he observed Nichole shake R.P.'s arm in an attempt to wake him. When R.P. did not respond, Nichole informed Bobby. Bobby lifted R.P. from his crib and the baby felt cold. Bobby said he placed a changing pad on the couch and R.P. on the changing pad in order to administer CPR. Bobby used the changing pad in order to keep the couch clean. According to Bobby, he administered CPR for 30 to 60 minutes. Bobby said that, while administering CPR, blood and mucus were emitted from R.P.'s mouth and nose, which Bobby spit into the garbage. Detective Smith testified that Bobby stated he placed a new changing pad underneath R.P. because the first one became soiled with blood. Bobby then continued with CPR, called an ambulance, and removed the garbage. When asked about the events a second time, Bobby said that, after he changed the first soiled changing pad, he placed it in the garbage can. At that time, he observed the garbage was full so he proceeded to remove it from the house. While taking the garbage out, Nichole performed CPR on R.P. When he returned inside the house, Bobby called an ambulance.

¶23 In response to Detective Smith's continued questions regarding what could have happened to R.P., Bobby reported that M.R. dropped R.P. while holding him. Bobby explained that M.R. was on the couch and fell asleep when Bobby heard a thud. Bobby said he did not report the incident to Nichole, but R.P. was inconsolable despite attempts to place him in his crib



and feed him. Bobby said he failed to report the incident earlier because he had many things on his mind. He explained that M.R. might not recall the incident.

¶24 Over respondent's objections, the trial court admitted four of the State's exhibits into evidence. The first exhibit contained a certified copy of the March 4, 2015, domestic battery complaint signed by Officer Weisinger on Nichole's behalf and a certified copy of a March 26, 2015, order of protection naming Nichole as petitioner and Bobby as respondent.

¶25 The second exhibit was R.P.'s September 10, 2015, post-mortem report. The report concluded that R.P. was one-month old when he died of multiple injuries due to child abuse. R.P.'s manner of death was homicide. The report provided that R.P. sustained severe blunt trauma to the head, including bleeding into the skeletal muscle at the back of the head and neck, a hemorrhage in the right side of the scalp and dense tissue surrounding the skull, fractures on the right side of his skull, and bleeding between the brain and fibrous capsule surrounding the brain. According to the report, one of the skull fractures and surrounding tissues showed evidence of healing, but the subdural hemorrhages were recent--showing no evidence of healing. R.P.'s eye wall revealed bleeding and there was bleeding around the nerve of the right eye and right optic nerve. The report also showed R.P. sustained tissue injuries to his torso, including a slight hemorrhage around the pancreas and liver, and multiple rib fractures to the back and sides of the ribs. The hemorrhages did not show signs of healing, but the rib fractures demonstrated healing callus formation. The report concluded that R.P. sustained trauma on multiple occasions. The demonstrated healing of the rib fractures generally occurred between seven and fourteen days after injury. The demonstrated healing of the skull fracture and surrounding tissues appeared to be several days to several weeks old. The subdural hemorrhage and some of the brain injuries, however, appeared to be only hours old.

¶26 The third exhibit was R.P.'s hospital medical records dated August 6, 2015, and September 9, 2015.

¶27 The fourth exhibit was a DCFS report and notes. A report dated July 5, 2011, stated that M.R., who was 2 years old at the time, had a swollen black eye. According to the DCFS report, Nichole brought M.R. to Bobby's house for the weekend during which time the injury occurred. Donna indicated that M.R. repeatedly returned home from weekend visits at Bobby's house with minor bumps and bruises. Donna additionally stated that there was prior domestic abuse between Nichole and Bobby. The report provided that Nichole and Bobby "appeared to be delayed." In a note dated July 6, 2011, a doctor, who examined M.R., indicated that Nichole was on her phone throughout the entire examination and looked "a little absent." The doctor said it was the first time she met Nichole because Donna usually was present for M.R.'s doctor appointments. A July 20, 2011, note provided:

"Donna (grandmother) stated [Nichole] said [M.R.] fell downstairs and hit a pole. Stated [M.R.] was with her mother when the incident occurred. Stated when she spoke with the caseworker, Lynn; Lynn said she was told a different story about how the injury occurred.

\* \* \*

[Donna] stated [Nichole] do[es] not know how to take care of [M.R.]. Stated that's why [M.R.] stays with her. Stated she take[s] [M.R.] to the doctor, school and does everything for [M.R.] Stated [Nichole] and [Bobby] had one fight. Stated the police said [Nichole] threaten [*sic*] to hurt herself after the fight. Stated [Nichole] was taken to some hospital for a few days. Stated [Nichole] is not mentally ill. Stated [Nichole] does not take any medication. Stated [Bobby] is not mentally ill either. C[PS] asked [Donna] how

[M.R.] acts when [Bobby] is around. [Donna] stated [M.R.] does not like [Bobby]. Stated [M.R.] is usually jumping around and happy ([CPS] observed [M.R.] acting this way today). [Donna] stated when [Bobby] is around, [M.R.] will just sit there and not move.”

A second note from that date reported Nichole’s observation that M.R. does not move around much in Bobby’s presence, but Nichole did not understand the reason. A third note from the same date stated that Bobby told a child protective services worker that he and M.R. were walking up the stairs of his apartment building when “this lady” called M.R.’s name and M.R. lost her balance, hitting her face on the stairs. A fourth note from the same dated revealed M.R.’s teacher observed red marks on M.R.’s neck, but she failed to report her observations because the marks did not look like hand marks.

¶28 Finally, a note dated September 6, 2011, provided that Nichole had been prescribed medication for depression; however, she refused to take the medication. The note further provided that Nichole suffered cognitive delays.

¶29 On April 28, 2017, after hearing all of the evidence, the trial court stated that R.P.’s autopsy report was sufficient to support its findings of neglect and abuse of all three minors, acknowledging that A.F. and T.F. were born after the incidents, however, applying the doctrine of anticipatory neglect to the twins. The court provided that the evidence was “overwhelming” and more than met the State’s burden of preponderance of the evidence. The court referred to Bobby’s statements, admitted over respondent’s objections, as “simply icing on the cake.” The court additionally found Nichole and Bobby to be “abject liars,” providing that no matter who beat R.P. to death it was “still an injurious environment.” Nichole was named as the perpetrator of the neglect and abuse.

¶30 A dispositional hearing was held on May 24, 2017, and all three minors were adjudged wards of the court. The trial court concluded that Nichole was unable to care for, protect, train, and discipline the minors and found she was unfit to parent.

¶31 This appeal followed.

¶32 ANALYSIS

¶33 Respondent contends the trial court erred in relying on Bobby's inadmissible statements to find M.R., T.F., and A.F. were neglected and abused.

¶34 The parties dispute the applicable standard of review. In general, evidentiary rulings are within the trial court's sound discretion and will not be disturbed on review absent an abuse of that discretion. *People v. Risper*, 2015 IL App (1st) 130993, ¶ 32. "The reason for this deferential standard is that the trial court's decision to admit evidence is often not made in isolation, but rather after consideration of many circumstances, including questions of prejudice and reliability, which the trial court is in a more suitable position to analyze than a reviewing court." *Id.* (citing *People v. Caffey*, 205 Ill. 2d 52, 89 (2001)). Respondent argues that the appropriate standard of review in this case is *de novo* because the issue is "the correctness of the [trial] court's legal interpretation of whether the evidence should be admitted." In *Risper*, this court did acknowledge that the abuse of discretion standard is not universally applicable for reviewing all evidentiary rulings. *Id.* ¶ 33. However, this court stated that the *de novo* standard of review is limited to instances where the trial court is alleged to have applied an "erroneous rule of law" and where the credibility of witnesses was not at issue, no relevant facts were in dispute, and the court's ruling was not related in any way to a balancing of probity versus prejudice. *Id.*

¶35 *De novo* review is not appropriate in this instance because the factors that typically warrant the deferential abuse of discretion standard are present here, namely, the credibility of

the witnesses testifying regarding the hearsay statements and the relevant facts at issue.

Accordingly, we find the abuse of discretion standard is applicable in this case. *Id.*

¶36 Respondent argues that Bobby’s statements made to McCree and Detective Smith and his videotaped statement were inadmissible hearsay, and the trial court erred in relying on those statements to find Nichole neglected and abused the minors, M.R., A.F., and T.F.

¶37 The evidentiary standard of proof in an adjudicatory hearing held pursuant to the Juvenile Act is preponderance of the evidence. 705 ILCS 405/2-18(1) (West 2014). “Preponderance of the evidence is that amount of evidence that leads a trier of fact to find that the fact at issue is more probable than not.” *In re K.G.*, 288 Ill. App. 3d 728, 735 (1997).

¶38 Section 2-3(1) of the Juvenile Act provides that a “neglected minor” includes “any minor under 18 years of age whose environment is injurious to his or her welfare.” 705 ILCS 405/2-3(1)(b) (West 2014). “Neglect” generally is defined as the failure to exercise the care that circumstances justly demand. *In re D.M.*, 2016 IL App (1st) 153608, ¶ 16. Our courts have recognized that “injurious environment” is an amorphous concept incapable of a particular definition. *Id.* That said, an “injurious environment” has been interpreted to include “ ‘the breach of a parent’s duty to ensure a “safe and nurturing shelter” for his or her children.’ ” *Id.* (quoting *In re N.B.*, 191 Ill. 2d 338, 346 (2000) (quoting *In re M.K.*, 271 Ill. App. 3d 820, 826 (1995))).

¶39 Section 2-3(2)(ii) of the Juvenile Act defines an “abused minor” as “any minor under 18 years of age whose parent or immediate family member, or any person responsible for the minor’s welfare, or any person who is in the same family or household as the minor, or any individual residing in the same home as the minor, or a paramour of the minor’s parent” “creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such minor by other than accidental means which would

be likely to cause death, disfigurement, impairment of emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.” 705 ILCS 405/2-3(2)(ii) (West 2014).

¶40 On review, a trial court’s ruling at the adjudicatory hearing will not be reversed unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re M.Z.*, 294 Ill. App. 3d 581, 592 (1988). A finding is against the manifest weight of the evidence only if the opposite conclusion is clearly evident. *In re Jordyn L.*, 2016 IL App (1st) 150956, ¶ 29. “Ultimately, the trial court ‘has broad discretion in determining the existence of neglect and abuse’ and there is a ‘strong and compelling presumption in favor of the result reached by the trial court’ in child custody cases. And, we may affirm the trial court’s ruling if any of its bases of abuse or neglect may be upheld.” (Internal citations omitted.) *Id.*

¶41 We conclude that the trial court’s ruling of neglect and abuse was sufficiently supported absent the admission of Bobby’s statements. The State demonstrated that Nichole and Bobby had a history of domestic abuse, including a police report filed on March 4, 2015, wherein Nichole complained that Bobby choked her while she was pregnant with R.P. and an order of protection filed on March 26, 2015, naming Nichole as petitioner and Bobby as respondent. Donna also confirmed that Nichole called her when Bobby hit her, including while Nichole was pregnant. Donna also stated that M.R. reported seeing Bobby hit Nichole. Notwithstanding, Nichole remained in a relationship and continued to live with Bobby as of the date of the adjudicatory hearing.

¶42 The evidence additionally revealed that Nichole was the subject of an intact case for over two years, from 2010 to 2012, because M.R. presented with a black eye after being in Bobby’s care. Nichole and Bobby both refused parenting and counseling services, and Nichole admitted she failed to take prescribed medication for her depression. The intact case was closed only

because Nichole allowed Donna to serve as M.R.'s guardian. Donna confirmed that, "everytime" she released M.R. to Nichole and Bobby's care, M.R. returned with an injury. The DCFS reports admitted into evidence additionally showed Donna questioned Nichole's ability to care for M.R., which was why Donna acted as M.R.'s guardian.

¶43 Most critically, the evidence demonstrated that R.P. died of multiple injuries due to child abuse while in Nichole and Bobby's care. R.P. was only one-month old at the time, yet the autopsy showed he suffered severe blunt trauma to the head, a hemorrhage to the scalp, a fractured skull, bleeding around the brain, bleeding in his eyeball, hemorrhages around his pancreas and liver, and multiple rib fractures. The injuries took place on multiple occasions as evidenced by the varying levels of healing. Notably, the demonstrated healing varied between injuries that took place seven to fourteen days prior, several days to several weeks prior, and just hours before. According to Nichole's statement to McCree, R.P. was fine on the day of his death. The baby had been fed and changed and placed in his crib by Bobby before she left the house. When Nichole returned home, R.P. was unresponsive and never regained consciousness despite attempts at CPR.

¶44 We conclude that the aforementioned evidence more than satisfied the State's burden of preponderance of the evidence by demonstrating Nichole neglected the minors based on a injurious environment and abused them based on the substantial risk of physical injury for any child living in the home. We recognize the trial court's finding with regard to A.F. and T.F. was anticipatory, in that the twins were not alive when R.P. died. We agree that the evidence supports an anticipatory finding of neglect and abuse for A.F. and T.F. See *In re Jordyn L.*, 2016 IL App (1st) 150956, ¶ 34 (anticipatory neglect protects both victims of neglect or abuse and those who may become neglected or abused).

¶45 Because we have concluded there is sufficient evidence to support the trial court’s finding that Nichole neglected and abused her children without having considered Bobby’s statements, we need not determine whether those statements were admitted in error. In other words, any error in admitting those statements would be harmless based on the vast evidence demonstrating Nichole neglected and abused M.R., A.F., and T.F. See *In re D.M.*, 2016 IL App (1st) 152608, ¶ 31 (“if the State can sustain its burden of proof with properly admitted evidence, the error in admitting improper evidence is considered harmless”). We, therefore, find the trial court did not err in concluding, following the adjudicatory hearing, that Nichole neglected and abused the minor children.

¶46

CONCLUSION

¶47 We affirm the trial court’s ruling following the adjudicatory hearing.

¶48 Affirmed.