



# GENERATION JUSTICE

(602) 710-1135 • info@genjustice.org • www.genjustice.org

## Current Timeline vs. Rocket Docket

2018

**JANUARY 1** - Emma is born substance exposed. The medical team alerts DCS, and Emma spends one week in the NICU withdrawing.

**JANUARY 7** - DCS places Emma in a foster home that is not certified or interested in adoption.

**MARCH 8** - The Court adopts DCS' reunification plan and drug treatment is offered to mom. DCS does a preliminary kinship search that does not lead to any relatives.

**NOVEMBER 13** - Birth mom attends drug treatment meetings sporadically and fails several drug tests. She attends most of the scheduled visits to see Emma.

2019

**FEBRUARY 6** - DCS follows its policy and searches again for kin again at the six month mark, and locates a cousin, age 18. Because DCS maintains a policy preference for kin, and because the cousin has no criminal history or history of child abuse, and is at least 18, DCS moves Emma from her foster family at 13-months-old. The move is not in Emma's best interests. Moving an infant after six months of age goes squarely against years of research on attachment and puts Emma at severe risk of developing future psychological disorders. Mom has a second baby who is drug-exposed. Baby Mary now accompanies Emma.

**MAY 8** - Emma has inconsolable tantrums and does not sleep through the night. Mary exhibits all the behavior of a drug-exposed infant. She screams and is very difficult to comfort. She has feeding and sleep issues. The cousin calls DCS and asks for Emma and Mary to be removed. Emma's former foster family has filled its only available crib, so Emma and Mary are moved to another foster family, Emma's third placement.

**NOVEMBER 9** - After a year and a half, DCS changes the case plan to severance because Mom is still testing positive for drugs and seldom visits Emma or Mary.

2020

**MARCH 12** - Mom's mom (grandma) calls DCS and says that she is willing to take Emma and Mary. Because she is kin, DCS moves the girls again.

**OCTOBER 15** - Because of Emma's and Mary's need for permanency, mom's failure to complete the case plan, and continuing substance abuse, the Court agrees to sever mom's parental rights to Emma and Mary. The girls become available for adoption, but Grandma does not proceed.

2021

**AUGUST 25** - Grandma reports that Emma smears feces, tantrums inconsolably, is aggressive to the baby, and will not obey. Mary has been kicked out of two different day care facilities and is defiant. The girls are now over three-and-a-half and two-and-a-half years old, and Grandma says they are too much to handle. She disrupts.

2022

**JANUARY 1** - Emma and Mary are five and four-years-old respectively. They have spent their entire lives in foster care without the stability or permanence of a family. They have been diagnosed with ADHD, developmental delay, attachment disorder, and anxiety, in combination with their drug-exposure at birth, putting them at risk for cognitive disabilities, motor delays, and behavioral functioning problems. Statistically, they have no chance of being adopted. Every year they spend in foster care reduces their chances of adoption by 25 percent.

Every year spent in foster care reduces chances of adoption by 25 percent.

2018

**JANUARY 1** - Emma is born substance exposed. Hospital informs DCS. Baby spends one week in the NICU withdrawing.

**JANUARY 7** - DCS investigates and identifies an aggravated circumstance: Mom has a conviction for possession of heroin dating three years prior, evidencing long-term substance use. DCS places Emma in a foster home that is certified to adopt.

**JANUARY 25** - DCS meets the 14-day deadline alerting the Court that aggravated circumstances exist and files for termination of parental rights from the mother.

**FEBRUARY 8** - DCS meets the Rocket Docket's new 30-day kinship search deadline using the best available private-sector investigators. Birth father is unknown to birth mom. DCS identifies one potential kinship placement: mom's cousin who is a single 18-year-old mother of a 2-month old. DCS determines it is in Emma's best interest to stay with the current foster placement.

**FEBRUARY 24** - Initial severance hearing takes place within the 10-day deadline.

**APRIL 10** - Judge holds severance trial within 45-day deadline.

**APRIL 13** - Court orders termination of parental rights. Mom has 15 days to appeal.

**OCTOBER 13** - Emma is adopted at 10.5-months old by the family she has lived with since birth. Emma is safe, loved and, with the patient nurturing of her adoptive parents, close to meeting developmental milestones despite the difficult circumstances of her birth.

**5+ YEARS orphaned to the system...**

**OR**

**11 months resolved.**

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of these children, but Emma and Mary's story, including length of time in care and number of placements, is an accurate representation. The girls still have not been adopted.*