

## Brianna Robinson-Harris Story

My husband and I, have been trying to get my niece out of foster care since Oct 2019, we responded Oct 29 after receiving the letter in the mail on September 16th 2019 and my mom telling me she wasn't able to get her grandchild. We didn't respond right away because my mother was working on getting her grandchild and has been in communication with the county about getting my niece since August. I waited until it didn't work. The county did not say why my mother wasn't considered as an placement option. My husband and I did come forward after hearing this did not work out.

When we came forward, I called Olmsted multiple times and did not get a call back until Nov 4th by a lady Cindy, she said she will have my niece social worker call me. My niece social worker did not call me until Dec1st 2019. The family conference was schedule for Dec 6th, 2019.

At that family conference, I told my niece foster parents, guardian at lietm, my niece social worker, adoption worker, my niece other family, and other Olmsted workers that I wanted to foster my niece. My niece social worker said, they are not interested in moving her anymore since she has already been in 5 different homes within two months. We then said we want to adopt her on Dec 6, 2019 at the family conference, and they said you guys will be considered if the parents' rights are terminated and to be patience. I said okay, well can we see her? We were told from the social worker that she will speak to my niece therapist to see if it's a good idea. She didn't get back to us. We ask again, and no response. We didn't get a call from my niece social worker until Feb 6, 2020 and they asked if we were still interested to adopt my niece. I said yes, they said can we all meet with you guys in person to discuss details. Of course, we said yes, where and when??...

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The meeting was schedule March 13th, 2020. The county met with us at my home 3/13/20 and discussed details and later said, let's wait this all out, but you guys are considered as a placement option. I have text messages to prove this. On 4/13/20 got a call that the courts were shut down due to Covid-19 and that they will give us more details when they get closer to rights being terminated. So, in that time we decided to move into a bigger home to make more room for my niece. The county told us my niece and daughter cannot share rooms.

If rights were terminated, we wanted to be prepared to take my niece and have a room for her. We moved in two months to a bigger home. During this time, we did not hear back from my niece social worker or from my family on the status of the case. We thought the courts were still on hold. We were also supposed to see my niece and the social worker never got back to us on that as well.

What happened and what went wrong? We thought we did everything right and was doing our due diligence to get things done what they asked us to do before adoption. They told us they will help us before rights were terminated, but everything was on hold due to Covid-19. On 6/26/20 rights were terminated?? Huh husband and I felt ghosted. Huh when did the courts open back up? We made numerous of calls to the Olmsted social services after hearing rights were terminated. We did not find out the parents' rights were terminated until July 16th. The social worker has my number and she could have updated me. She did not and now act like I do not exist.

We were frustrated because Olmsted County told us that they will get us ready before the parents' rights were terminated and they wanted to make us look good in front of the judge by preparing us with a home study. They also told us that they will help us see my niece and felt

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really optimistic about that back in March 2020, I told them it's important for me to see my niece because I did not want her to go to long without seeing us, but if they told us this why did they ghost us?

On 10/6/20, we finally started the home study process because Olmsted County finally sent a referral over to LSS. Finally assigned a worker to us and she tells us we need a lawyer because my niece could be adopted any day now?? Huh?? How could this happen??? We are so lost, heartbroken, and confused. They told us once the referral was sent over, we would get a chance to step in front of the judge to get a chance to adopt, but they lied to us again. They moved on without us. No call back or anything. No updates.

I called a lawyer on Oct 6, 2020 and they told me according to Mn status 260c.260 I am supposed to be sent a placement letter regarding to my niece and to study this status. He told me to call Olmsted County and to demand a placement letter and that they have 30 days to send me that letter. Olmsted County said by law they have to send me a placement letter before she is adopted. The county was tired of my calls and they set up a meeting with us on Oct 15th, 2020 to discussed details regarding to my niece.

In that meeting, they will send me a placement letter as soon as it gets close to my niece placement hearing. They said my niece could get adopted in months and that I should send the county a letter and they will file a motion on my behalf. They also said I should file a motion to intervene the adoption once the placement letter is sent out for me to intervene the adoption. I said okay, will do! Never received a placement letter. They tried to have my niece adopted on Nov 9th, 2020 and didn't send me a placement letter (according to the law) like they said they will. My lawyer even said, Olmsted County is up to something...

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The state is trying to keep my niece away from us. I filed a motion to intervene with a lawyer and my motion was denied. It was denied because they said, I did not respond to any notifications and that they did not hear back from me. Also, they said, they did not hear from me until Oct 19th 2020. I have call logs that proved in Oct 2019, I called Olmsted County multiple times and they did not call me back until Nov4th 2019. I was told my niece social worker will give me a call and she did not call me until Dec 1st 2019. I have text messages from my niece social worker that they were coming to my home on March 13th 2020 to discuss adoption details and etc.. also call logs to prove that I was responsive and acknowledging Olmsted County notifications. They also said, I was being considered as a potential placement option if my niece needed to be adopted. But in court, they said they never considered me as an option.

Now we appealed the decision and it was granted. We have an upcoming court case in March 2021.

We have a complete home study and received a positive review for our home study.

My husband and I, have stable income, have a home, flexible job, married, and eager/desire to be there to support my niece. I have been trying to adopt her since she was two years old, but her mother changed her mind and so now 3 years later she ended up in the foster care system. My niece has needs and I have my Masters in Mental health psychology with 10 years of experience dealing with challenging behaviors. I feel like my experience has allowed me the experience to handle anything that comes my way. I love kids. I have a 5-year-old daughter who I love to pieces and will do anything for.

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My family and I trusted in the system that they would do what's right for my niece and her family. Olmsted County has never made any follow-up or follow through with what they said they will do. They never advocated for my niece. They just did what was easy for them and kept her with her foster family. I even asked if I can get my niece on weekends and they told me that is a dream and that may never happen.

My niece was separated from her siblings, lost her parents, and now she is losing her family due to the negligence of the system. Since Aug 2019 she has been in foster care. I have been doing everything in my power trying to get my niece and I will not give up.

My husband and I, needs you guys help. We need the state to know the truth. Family did step forward and continuing to step forward, but misled by Olmsted County and felt like they judged us due to color of our skin because at the court hearing, the judge said a lot of things that was not right. He made a comment and said that if my niece comes with us, she could get pregnant at a young age and lose her parental rights at 15 years old. He also said, no matter when you guys came forward, his answer will always be no, without no explanation for that answer. They tried to say bad things about us for no reason and we are a great loving family.