

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE**

**CONSENT TO ADOPTION DECISION**

In the matter of:	<b>Alyssa Ann Keast (DOB: 1/22/2000) Case Number: X2325462A</b>  <b>Amber Marie Keast (DOB: 8/18/2002) Case Number: X1437623A</b>  <b>Court File Number: 05-6388-NA</b>
Prospective Adoptive Family:	<b>Timothy and Barbara Atwood (maternal grandparents) 13613 Thornapple Avenue Grant, Michigan 49327</b>
Adoption Worker:	<b>Suzanne Adams Bethany Christian Services/Fremont</b>
Date of Termination of Parental Rights:	<b>May 10, 2006 Newaygo County Circuit Court-Family Division</b>

The adoption agency has presented the completed Child Adoptive Assessment(s) and Adoptive Family Assessment to the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) of the Department of Human Services. These materials, along with any additional information provided to the MCI Office, have been carefully reviewed and a decision has been made based on the children's best interests.

**Decision and Factors Considered**

It is the decision of the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) Office that it is not in the best interests of Alyssa and Amber Keast to be adopted by Timothy and Barbara Atwood. Their request to be granted consent to adoption of the children is denied. The following factors were considered in making this decision:

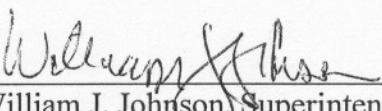
- Alyssa and Amber were placed with their maternal grandparents, Timothy and Barbara Atwood, on March 14, 2005 but removed on June 25, 2005 when it was discovered that they had allowed unsupervised visits between the children and their birth mother. In at least one instance this resulted in the children having contact with the mother's boyfriend in spite of a court order prohibiting any contact. Mr. and Mrs. Atwood maintain that the agency's instructions in regard to visitation were non-specific and they understood that they could use their own discretion. However Mr. Atwood acknowledged to the Foster Care Review Board

at a hearing held on July 13, 2005 that they were aware they were to supervise any contact between the children and their mother and that the children were not to have contact with her boyfriend. Adoption policy specifically cites a relative's inability to protect children from the birth parents as a reason for denial of consent to adoption.

- Timothy Atwood admitted to smoking marijuana with his daughter, the children's mother, in 2004. He did this in spite of the fact that the daughter had a history of substance abuse and mental health problems. While Mr. Atwood indicates that he gave in to his daughter's pleading, this raises serious questions about his judgment as well as his ability to make the children's interests a priority. Furthermore, Mr. Atwood acknowledges that he has a history of using hard drugs, quitting 28 years ago, and smoking marijuana until March of 2005. He has never participated in a drug treatment program. While he insists that he has no current substance abuse problems, given his history there remains a risk of relapse.
- Alyssa and Amber have made significant progress since being placed in foster care. However they continue to struggle with emotional and behavioral problems. The Atwoods blame these problems on the fact that the children were removed from their care. They don't appear to recognize that the girls have been negatively impacted by many factors, including their early childhood experiences. This lack of insight could prevent them from dealing effectively with the children's mental health issues. The children's therapist feels that their present placement has been beneficial and that returning to the grandparents would be detrimental to their mental health.

Section 45 of the Michigan Adoption Code permits a person who wishes to adopt a child to file a petition in the court that terminated parental rights if they believe that they have been arbitrarily and capriciously denied consent to adoption.

January 17, 2007

  
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William J. Johnson, Superintendent  
Michigan Children's Institute

cc: Timothy and Barbara Atwood  
Suzanne Adams, Bethany Christian Services  
Attorney Shon A. Cook