

Circuit Court for Baltimore City  
Case No. 192086016 & 192086020

UNREPORTED\*

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF MARYLAND

No. 2352

September Term, 2024

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CLARENCE WOODWARD

v.

STATE OF MARYLAND

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Wells, C.J.,  
Reed,  
Wilson, Brett R.,  
(Specially Assigned),

JJ.

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Opinion by Wells, C.J.

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Filed: March 3, 2026

\* This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Maryland Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

Appellant Clarence Woodward is appealing the Circuit Court for Baltimore City’s denial of his Motion for Reduction of Sentence Pursuant to the Juvenile Restoration Act (“JUVRA”). Woodward was sentenced to life imprisonment as a juvenile for his participation in the kidnapping and murder of Vitalis Pilius. He filed his original motion under JUVRA after serving 30 years of his sentence. The circuit court held two hearings on the motion, during which seven witnesses testified and 48 pieces of evidence were admitted. The court issued a written opinion denying Woodward relief. Woodward now appeals.

Woodward asserts six allegations of error,<sup>1</sup> which we have condensed into two:

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<sup>1</sup> Woodward’s verbatim questions are:

1. Did the Court commit reversible error by failing to apply the factors in CP § 8-110(d) consistently with the purpose of the JUVRA and the Eighth Amendment jurisprudence underlying it, and did its failure to do so render its legal determinations under CP § 8-110(c) erroneous as a matter of law?
  - a. Did the Court err as a matter of law in applying JUVRA Factor 1, “the individual’s age at the time of the offense,” when it treated Woodward’s age at the time of offense—16 years old—as an *aggravating* factor?
  - b. Did the Court err as a matter of law in applying JUVRA Factor 3, “whether the individual has substantially complied with the rules of the institution in which the individual has been confined,” by focusing on old infractions Woodward committed as an adolescent and young man and failing to recognize his “substantial compliance” with institutional rules as an adult over the past 17 years?

- I. Did the court commit legal error in its analyses of JUVRA factors 1, 3, 5, and 7?
- II. Did the court commit clear error by omitting certain pieces of evidence from its opinion and misstating others?

For the reasons that follow, we hold the court did not err in its denial of Woodward’s motion. Therefore, we affirm.

### **FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND**

Woodward was 16 years old when he participated in the kidnapping and murder of Vitalis Pilius in 1992 with his co-defendant, Dontay Carter. After a first trial, Woodward was acquitted of first-degree murder. However, he was convicted after a second trial of kidnapping and felony murder. Woodward was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. In 2022, after having served 30 years of his sentence, Woodward filed a motion to reduce his sentence to time served under the Juvenile Restoration Act (“JUVRA”), Maryland Code, Criminal Procedure Article (“CP”) § 8-110.

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c. Did the Court err as a matter of law in applying JUVRA Factor 5, “whether the individual has demonstrated maturity, rehabilitation, and fitness to reenter society sufficient to justify a sentence reduction,” by treating as dispositive Woodward’s dated institutional infractions?

d. Did the Court err as a matter of law in applying JUVRA Factor 7 by rejecting the report and testimony of a board-certified forensic psychologist for using widely accepted methods and psychological tests, and when the State stipulated to the expert’s qualifications, did not contest any of her findings, and there was no evidence in the record contradicting her findings?

e. Did the Court improperly weigh multiple JUVRA Factors by misstating evidence it cited in support of its adverse findings on those factors and failing to address extensive evidence contradicting those findings?

Woodward’s motion addressed each JUVRA factor and discussed why they weighed in favor of a sentence reduction. Overall, his motion argued that he is not a danger to the public and the interests of justice would be served by releasing him. He attached 39 supporting exhibits. The State filed a response opposing the motion. Almost a year later, Woodward filed a supplemental memorandum to his motion and attached nine additional exhibits. The court held a hearing on the motion, at which five witnesses testified. Woodward exercised his right of allocution as well, directly addressing the victim’s family to express his remorse. The victim’s wife, Aldona Pilius, forgave Woodward for what he did.

More than half a year later, Woodward filed a Motion to Submit Supplemental Evidence and Request Status Conference. The court held a second hearing at which Woodward and two additional witnesses testified on Woodward’s behalf, including Aldona Pilius. After the second hearing, the State filed an amended response to Woodward’s motion to indicate it was no longer opposing the motion.<sup>2</sup>

After a 29-month delay, the presiding judge issued her opinion, denying relief under CP § 8-110. In her memorandum opinion, the judge addressed all ten required factors under JUVRA, including the eleventh catch-all factor, under separate subheadings. She indicated whether each factor weighed in favor or against a determination that Woodward is not a

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<sup>2</sup> The State’s original opposition was filed under then-State’s Attorney for Baltimore City, Marilyn Mosby. The State’s amended response was filed under the present State’s Attorney for Baltimore City, Ivan Bates.

danger to the public and that the interests of justice would be better served by reducing his sentence. In all, the judge decided Woodward “remains a danger to the public and that the interests of justice will not be served by a reduced sentence.” Woodward now appeals from this decision.

Both parties submitted supplemental briefing on the Supreme Court of Maryland’s recent decision in *Trimble v. State*, 491 Md. 378 (2025), which was decided after the initial briefs were filed.

### **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

“Under JUVRA, the decision to grant or deny a motion for reduction of sentence under CP § 8-110 generally rests in the discretion of the circuit court upon consideration of the enumerated factors.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 405 (2025). “Yet even under that deferential standard of review, the circuit court’s discretion is tempered by the requirement that the court apply the ‘correct legal standards[.]’” *Faulkner v. State*, 468 Md. 418, 460–61 (2020) (citing *Jackson v. Sollie*, 449 Md. 165, 196 (2016)). When a court fails to do so, it abuses its discretion. *See, e.g., Wilson-X v. Dep’t of Human Res.*, 403 Md. 667, 675 (2008) (“[T]rial judges do not have discretion to apply inappropriate legal standards, even when making decisions that are regarded as discretionary in nature.”); *Matter of Dory*, 244 Md. App. 177, 203 (2019) (same). Whether the circuit court properly construed and applied CP § 8-110 is a question of law that we review de novo. *Mayor and City Council of Baltimore v. Thornton Mellon, LLC*, 478 Md. 396, 410 (2022) (citations omitted); *Davis v. State*, 474 Md. 439, 451 (2021) (stating that with issues of law, “[w]e are not looking at

whether the trial court abused its discretion in its ultimate determination, but whether it applied the proper legal standard[ ] in exercising its discretion”).

In discussing how we should construe the lower court’s decision and the level of detail included therein, the Supreme Court of Maryland adopted “the District of Columbia’s approach to analyzing its equivalent to CP § 8-110”:

That is, “a trial court is not obligated to recount every detail of its preceding analysis, ultimately resolve every dispute of fact, or restate the weight ascribed to every factor.” *Bishop v. United States*, 310 A.3d 629, 648 (D.C. 2024). Rather, so long as the written decision demonstrates that the court adequately considered each of the ten enumerated factors, and any other factor that the court determined was relevant, and “clearly states the critical facts and reasons supporting its dangerousness and interests-of-justice analyses, and those facts and reasons are supported by the record,” the court will not have abused its discretion. *Id.*; *see also Beales v. State*, 329 Md. 263, 273, 619 A.2d 105 (1993) (explaining that trial judges have no obligation “to spell out in words every thought and step of logic[ ]” when announcing the reasons for their decisions).

*Trimble*, 491 Md. at 406–07.

## DISCUSSION

### I. The Court Did Not Commit Legal Error in Applying the JUVRA Factors.

#### A. Parties’ Contentions

Woodward argues the circuit court erred in its application of JUVRA Factor 1 (age at the time of offense); Factor 3 (substantial compliance with institutional rules); Factor 5 (maturity and rehabilitation); and Factor 7 (report from a health professional). For Factor 1, Woodward asserts this factor can never be treated as “aggravating” or otherwise weigh against a movant under JUVRA since the statute’s underlying presumption is that juveniles under 18 have diminished culpability. Woodward further contends the court erred by

considering his lifestyle under this factor, rather than simply his numerical age. In his supplemental brief, Woodward contends *Trimble* is so factually dissimilar to his case that it is incomparable, but still supports his argument that the court should not have considered his life circumstances under this factor. For Factor 3, Woodward claims the court erred by “failing to account for the significant reduction in infractions that have occurred over the course of Woodward’s incarceration.” Woodward maintains the court should have considered that the overwhelming majority of his infractions occurred during the initial years of his incarceration and that over the past 17 years, he only committed two infractions.

Under Factor 5, Woodward argues the court failed to conduct a “robust” assessment of his maturity and rehabilitation as he asserts is required under JUVRA and its legislative purpose by again relying on his “dated infractions from more than 20 years ago.” Woodward claims the court’s failure to mention the various pieces of evidence he filed to demonstrate his rehabilitation “effectively denied Woodward’s statutory right to prove he is rehabilitated and fit to reenter society.” For Factor 7, Woodward asserts the court erred in rejecting the report of his expert, Dr. Anita Boss, as “self-reported” because self-reporting is the accepted professional standard for forensic psychologists to gather information. Further, Woodward argues, Dr. Boss used multiple widely accepted testing methods. Woodward also takes issue with the court’s finding that evidence in the record contradicted Dr. Boss’ testimony and report, asserting there was no such evidence—especially since the State neither provided their own expert nor contested Dr. Boss’

findings. Finally, Woodward asserts only in his reply brief, and emphasized during oral argument, that the court committed legal error under Factor 9 by failing to explicitly discuss the role an adult played in the crime.

The State argues the court properly exercised its discretion in denying Woodward’s motion and that Woodward’s arguments impose unfounded restrictions on the circuit court without acknowledging the scope of the court’s discretion. On Factor 1, the State analogizes Woodward’s claim to that made in *Trimble*, which was rejected by our Court and our Supreme Court. The State contends nothing in JUVRA imposes the restriction Woodward asserts, and the court did not treat his age as “aggravating” in its analysis. As to Woodward’s remaining claims, the State asserts that under *Trimble* and the relevant standards of review, the circuit court is vested with substantial discretion in analyzing the JUVRA factors. As such, the State contends “the circuit court had no duty to credit Woodward’s evidence or weigh and discuss that evidence in a manner more favorable to his motion.”

### **B. Analysis**

We conclude the circuit court acted within its broad discretion in its analyses of JUVRA Factors 1, 3, 5, 7, and, to the extent it was raised, 9. The General Assembly enacted JUVRA in 2021, which, among other things, “authorized a juvenile offender sentenced before its effective date (October 1, 2021) who has spent more than 20 years in prison to file a motion to reduce the remaining sentence.” *Jedlicka v. State*, 481 Md. 178, 188–89 (2022). The relevant portion of JUVRA for this appeal, CP § 8-110, lists certain procedural

requirements for a motion thereunder (*e.g.*, the movant is entitled to a hearing on his motion, CP § 8-110(b)(1)). However, at issue today is the extent of a circuit court’s discretion in considering the mandatory factors under subsection (d):

(d) A court shall consider the following factors when determining whether to reduce the duration of a sentence under this section:

- (1) the individual’s age at the time of the offense;
- (2) the nature of the offense and the history and characteristics of the individual;
- (3) whether the individual has substantially complied with the rules of the institution in which the individual has been confined;
- (4) whether the individual has completed an educational, vocational, or other program;
- (5) whether the individual has demonstrated maturity, rehabilitation, and fitness to reenter society sufficient to justify a sentence reduction;
- (6) any statement offered by a victim or a victim’s representative;
- (7) any report of a physical, mental, or behavioral examination of the individual conducted by a health professional;
- (8) the individual’s family and community circumstances at the time of the offense, including any history of trauma, abuse, or involvement in the child welfare system;
- (9) the extent of the individual’s role in the offense and, if the individual was a minor at the time of the offense, whether and to what extent an adult was involved in the offense;
- (10) the diminished culpability of a juvenile as compared to an adult, including an inability to fully appreciate risks and consequences, if applicable; and
- (11) any other factor the court deems relevant.

CP § 8-110(d).

Our Supreme Court’s recent opinion in *Trimble* is quite instructive on the breadth of the circuit court’s discretion. Although the court must consider each of the ten factors listed under CP § 8-110(d), the ultimate decision depends on the court’s determination that: (1) the individual is not a danger to the public; and (2) the interests of justice will be better served by a reduced sentence. CP § 8-110(c). While the statute itself provides no additional definition, “[t]he interests of justice’ has been defined as ‘the proper view of what is fair and right in a matter in which the decision-maker has been granted discretion.’” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 408 (citing Black’s Law Dictionary (12th ed. 2024)). “The use of this open-ended phrase reflects the broad discretion that is vested in the trial court to determine what is fair and right, provided that in so doing, it considers the enumerated factors.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 408. In other words, “[t]he factors listed in CP § 8-110(d)—while required to be ‘consider[ed]’ in every case—are the guideposts to assist the circuit court in determining the inquiry presented under subsection (c).” *Id.* at 411.

For the level of consideration given each factor: “CP § 8-110(d) is silent regarding the weight that a court must give to any particular factor in its dangerousness and interests-of-justice analysis. That silence indicates that the factors listed in subsection (d) are intended to provide a circuit court *maximum flexibility* in considering each factor.” *Id.* at 411–12 (emphasis supplied). “The circuit court simply is required to *consider* the factors under subsection (d), and the circuit court’s written decision simply must reflect that consideration.” *Id.* at 413. In sum: “The circuit court’s resolution of a JUVRA motion is the epitome of a case-specific decision. As such, no two circuit court judges are likely to

view in exactly the same manner a particular constellation of the factors contained in CP § 8-110(d).” *Id.*

Turning to this case, we first acknowledge the large factual disparity between Woodward’s underlying convictions and those in *Trimble*. While Trimble was a leader in a criminal episode the JUVRA court described as “one of the most brutal, savage crimes in the modern history of cases tried in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County,” *id.* at 400, Woodward presented evidence that he had a more passive role in his co-defendant’s crimes and was even threatened into initially participating. However, as the State correctly notes in its supplemental brief, the factual differences between the cases have little to no bearing on whether the circuit court properly applied the JUVRA factors. *See id.* at 413 (“[R]esolution of a JUVRA motion is the epitome of a case-specific decision.”).

**1. The court did not err in applying Factor 1.**

Regarding Woodward’s claim of error under Factor 1 (the individual’s age at the time of the offense), Trimble made a nearly identical argument that was rejected by both of this state’s appellate courts. In *Trimble*, our Supreme Court held a circuit court is not required to treat an individual’s age under Factor 1 as favoring a sentence reduction in every case. *Id.* at 410. There, the JUVRA court stated under its Factor 1 analysis: “Trimble was three or four months shy of his 18th birthday at the time of the killing of [the victim]. This factor weighs against reducing the sentence.” *Id.* at 399. Although Trimble—as Woodward does here—argued the court had improperly treated his age as an “aggravating factor,” the Supreme Court rejected this notion and explicitly concluded the circuit court’s

finding (“[t]his factor weighs against reducing the sentence”) was “functionally equivalent to saying that, in the court’s estimation, the age factor did not weigh in favor of” granting the motion. *Id.* at 414.

We extend this conclusion to Woodward’s argument that the circuit court treated his age as an “aggravating factor.” By concluding Woodward’s age “weighs against” granting the motion, the court was functionally saying his age did not weigh in his favor. As for Woodward’s argument that the court erred by including facts about his lifestyle under this factor rather than relying only on his numerical age, we disagree based on *Trimble*’s emphasis that JUVRA is a case-specific decision. The Supreme Court applied principles of statutory interpretation to conclude as much:

By using the phrase “the individual” in subsection (d)(1) [(Factor 1)], the General Assembly is referring to the specific individual who is seeking relief—as distinct from a “juvenile” generically, as referenced in subsection (d)(10). Equating the two provisions would effectively omit the language “at the time of the offense” from CP § 8-110(d)(1) because all eligible movants were juveniles at the time of the offense. Moreover, given the juvenile eligibility requirements under subsection (a)(1), as well as the diminished culpability factor set forth in (d)(10), there would be no point in the General Assembly including an age factor if consideration of that factor was required to always weigh in favor of a sentence reduction. Mr. Trimble’s interpretation of factor one—that age is a categorical assessment instead of an individual one—would render factor ten redundant or surplusage.

We further determine that interpreting the first factor through an individualized lens is consistent with the statutory scheme, which requires the court to look at the movant’s life circumstances, including their age, at the time of the offense. Notably, the eighth factor uses similar language in that it requires courts to consider the movant’s community and family circumstances “at the time of the offense.” These factors are case-specific and taken together, inform the court’s understanding of the individual’s life when the offense occurred.

*Id.* at 412. *See also Miller v. State*, No. 2293, Sept. Term, 2022, 2024 WL 4224038 at \*19 (Md. App. Ct. Sept. 18, 2024) (“Accordingly, even if two offenders were the same age, the court might reach different conclusions about them based on their individual circumstances.”). Therefore, the court’s inclusion of specific facts about Woodward’s life in addition to his age at the time of the offense was within the court’s broad discretion to consider his motion “through an individualized lens.”

Further, Woodward’s suggested interpretation of Factor 1—that only the individual’s objective age matters—would lead to the assumption that every 16-year-old is the same and should be treated the same way due simply to their numerical age, as this panel noted at oral argument. This conclusion runs contrary to Woodward’s remaining arguments that center on the individualized considerations within each person’s case. As our Supreme Court emphasized in *Trimble*, Factor 1 must be an individualized analysis. We find no error on Factor 1.

## **2. The court did not err in applying Factor 3.**

Under Factor 3 (whether the individual has substantially complied with the rules of the institution in which he has been confined), Woodward argues the court erred by failing to consider his significant reduction in institutional violations over time, specifically taking issue with the court omitting that Woodward had only been cited twice in the past 17 years. However, this argument is likewise tempered by *Trimble*’s mandate that circuit courts have significant discretion in deciding JUVRA motions. *See* 491 Md. at 413 (“The circuit court simply is required to consider the factors under subsection (d), and the circuit court’s

written decision simply must reflect that consideration.”). Since the court devotes a paragraph to recounting Woodward’s history of institutional infractions through the most recent—a central consideration as to whether he has complied with institutional rules—the court adequately considered Factor 3.

**3. The court did not err in applying Factor 5.**

Under Factor 5 (whether the individual has demonstrated maturity, rehabilitation, and fitness to reenter society sufficient to justify a sentence reduction), Woodward argues the court erred by not undertaking a “robust” assessment of the rehabilitative evidence he provided and instead relying again on his older institutional infractions. Woodward attempts to impose a restriction on the court which does not exist under CP § 8-110’s language or our appellate courts’ interpretations of it. As with Factor 3, the court included details and specifics in its evaluation of Factor 5. Although not as “robust” as Woodward prefers, the court specifically mentioned the volume and content of the character letters Woodward submitted before expressing its concern about Woodward’s most recent infractions. Among other things, “a trial court is not obligated to recount every detail of its preceding analysis” in a JUVRA opinion. *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 407 (quoting *Bishop*, 310 A.3d at 648). Since the court’s opinion reflects consideration of the evidence, the court adequately applied Factor 5.

**4. The court did not err in applying Factor 7.**

As for Factor 7 (any report of a physical, mental, or behavioral examination of the individual conducted by a health professional), Woodward challenges the court’s rejection

of Dr. Boss’ report and testimony as lacking credibility. As with Factor 1, Trimble raised a similar argument that our courts rejected. There, Trimble argued the lower court abused its discretion in refusing to credit his expert’s testimony on the remission of his Antisocial Personality Disorder (“ASPD”). *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 389. Under the relevant standard of review, our Supreme Court explained that “the circuit court, as the factfinder in th[e] case, [is] vested with the discretion to evaluate the evidence as it [sees] fit.” *Id.* at 421 (citing *Trimble v. State*, 262 Md. App. 452, 471–72 (2024)). Put plainly, “[a] circuit court sitting as a factfinder, like a jury, is ‘free to believe some, all, or none of the evidence presented[.]’” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 421 (quoting *Sifrit v. State*, 383 Md. 116, 135 (2004)). The circuit court decided not to credit most of Trimble’s expert’s testimony on his ASPD diagnosis “primarily by crediting other expert testimony in the record.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 422.

This does not impose a requirement of competing expert testimony in order for a court to have an adequate basis for its disbelief of an expert’s opinions, as Woodward suggests in his supplemental brief. In *Trimble*, the Supreme Court relied on the totality of the circumstances in reaching its conclusion that Trimble was not fit to reenter society, thereby rejecting his expert’s opinion on the possibility that his ASPD remitted:

Despite these rehabilitative efforts, the court determined that Mr. Trimble was not fit to reenter society, particularly given Mr. Trimble’s request—at nearly age 40—to exhume [the victim’s] body for DNA testing.

This determination was also based on the nature of the offense, which the court identified as “one of the most brutal, savage crimes in the modern history of cases tried in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County;” the victim impact statement, which conveyed that Mr. Trimble’s crimes “had a deep,

life changing impact on the family of [the victim];” and Mr. Trimble’s “leading role” in the offense.

*Id.* at 423 (cleaned up). Reiterating the court’s broad discretion in deciding JUVRA motions, the Supreme Court stated that “[s]o long as the circuit court adhered to CP § 8-110’s requirements, it had the discretion to credit all, part, or none of the evidence regardless of the source and to assess the evidence as it saw fit.” *Id.*

In this case, the circuit court adhered to § 8-110’s requirements of considering each factor in its analysis and providing its consideration in writing. The court stated Dr. Boss, Woodward’s expert, had been accepted as an expert in forensic psychology, mentioned her qualifications, and listed the sources upon which she based her opinion. Additionally, the court summarized multiple findings Dr. Boss made in her report before ultimately concluding her opinions lacked credibility based on the self-reported information and contradictory evidence in the record. The court was not required to explicitly state which evidence was contradictory so long as the court considered Dr. Boss’ findings in its overall analysis. Since the trial court was best situated to evaluate the evidence after having conducted two hearings, admitting dozens of exhibits, and accepting testimony from multiple people, this Court will not disturb its credibility determination—“it had the discretion to credit all, part, or none of the evidence regardless of the source and to assess the evidence as it saw fit.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 423. As such, we find no error.

**5. Although Woodward only raised the argument in his reply brief and at oral argument, the court did not err in applying Factor 9.**

Finally, Woodward asserted in his reply brief and at oral argument that the court legally erred by failing to address the statutory language of Factor 9 regarding the extent

to which an adult was involved in the offense. We emphasize first that Woodward did not properly raise his legal challenge to Factor 9 because he did not raise it in his opening brief.

As our Supreme Court has explained:

Nor is it permissible to present that argument in a reply brief. In *Federal Land Bank v. Esham*, 43 Md.App. 446, 459 (1979), the Court of Special Appeals correctly noted that, although reply briefs are permitted under the Rules of appellate procedure, their function is limited to responding to points and issues raised in the appellee’s brief. An appellant is required to articulate and adequately argue all issues the appellant desires the appellate court to consider in the appellant’s initial brief. It is impermissible to hold back the main force of an argument to a reply brief and thereby diminish the opportunity of the appellee to respond to it.

*Oak Crest Vill., Inc. v. Murphy*, 379 Md. 229, 241–42 (2004).

Here, Woodward argued in his initial brief that the court erred *factually* in failing to address the extent to which his co-defendant, Dontay Carter, was involved in the crime under Factor 9 (see Section II below). Woodward then asserted this error under Factor 9 was “legal error” in his reply brief. Finally, at argument, counsel for Woodward emphasized that the court’s treatment of Factor 9 was legal error. His arguments in his reply brief and at oral argument did not align with that made in his initial brief.

Regardless of the impermissible manner in which the argument for legal error was raised, however, we still conclude the court did not legally err in applying Factor 9 for the same reasons articulated above. The court has a high level of discretion in applying JUVRA and does not have to articulate each step of its thought process. In Woodward’s case, the court discussed Carter’s involvement in the offense throughout its opinion. When addressing Factor 2 specifically (the nature of the offense and the history and

characteristics of the individual), the court recounted Carter’s role, including that Carter was the one who accosted the victim, drove the victim’s car to the vacant home, beat the victim, and rented cars and hotel rooms with the victim’s credit cards. Then, under Factor 9, the court reiterated Woodward’s involvement *in relation to* Carter:

Defendant was in the backseat of the car with Victim who was bound and pleading for his life. He was present when [Carter] dragged Victim into a vacant home. He overheard and briefly observed [Carter] beating the victim. For two days after, he rode around with [Carter], in Victim’s car, and went on shopping sprees using stolen credit cards. There is no evidence that Defendant attempted to leave [Carter] during or after the crime.

The fact that the court did not mention Carter’s status as an “adult” under Factor 9 does not mean the court failed to consider the extent to which an adult was involved.<sup>3</sup> “[W]e presume that trial judges know the law and apply it properly.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 405 (citing *State v. Chaney*, 375 Md. 168, 183–84 (2003)). We see nothing in the record indicating the court misunderstood or misapplied the law.

## **II. The Court Did Not Commit Clear Error in its Factual Findings.**

### **A. Parties’ Contentions**

Finally, Woodward contends the court committed clear error by both misstating evidence in the record and failing to address extensive evidence contradicting its findings. He first claims the court erred by stating under Factor 2 that “Woodward rented cars and hotel rooms using the victim’s credit cards, . . . while relegating to a footnote the fact that

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<sup>3</sup> We note that Carter was 18 at the time of the offenses, only two years older than Woodward.

it was his *Co-Defendant* who rented the cars and hotel rooms.” Woodward also asserts the court erred by ignoring that “Carter threatened Woodward at gunpoint to coerce his participation in the kidnapping of Mr. Pilius,” as well as “several pieces of unrebutted evidence” that Woodward’s only infraction since 2014 was explainable. Woodward maintains that under Factor 7, the court erred by stating Dr. Boss had not included Woodward’s infractions from 2006 and 2008 in her report. Under Factor 8, Woodward contends the court erred by coming to the opposite conclusion from Dr. Boss after relying primarily on Dr. Boss’ description of Woodward’s family and community circumstances. Finally, Woodward argues the court erred in addressing Factor 9 by omitting “that an adult instigated the crime and exerted influence over Woodward.”

The State, in a footnote, argues the court did not commit clear error because first, by Woodward’s own admission, the court clarified in its opinion that Carter was the one who rented the cars and hotel rooms. The State further contends that the court’s misstatement about Dr. Boss failing to include two of Woodward’s prior infractions was immaterial to the court’s decision. Rather, the State argues the court found Dr. Boss’ report to lack credibility based on her reliance on self-reported information and contradictory evidence in the record.

### **B. Analysis**

Appellate challenges to JUVRA denials typically raise legal errors, and we have not found authority establishing a concrete right to appeal the JUVRA court’s factual findings. However, we assume such authority from the *Trimble* court stating in its standard of review

that “we exercise clear error deference to the court’s first-level findings,” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 406, which encompass “a hearing judge’s determination and weighing of first-level findings of fact,” *id.* (quoting *Longshore v. State*, 399 Md. 486, 498 (2007)). In other contexts, factual “[f]indings cannot be clearly erroneous if there is any competent material evidence to support the factual findings of the trial court.” *Small v. State*, 464 Md. 68 (2019) (citation omitted) (cleaned up).

As to Woodward’s first allegation of clear error—that the court erred by stating that “Woodward rented cars and hotel rooms using the victim’s credit cards, . . . while relegating to a footnote the fact that it was his *Co-Defendant* who rented the cars and hotel rooms”—we agree with the State that the court’s inclusion of the clarifying footnote was a sufficient statement of the facts. The correct information is in the opinion, albeit in a footnote. Thus, we cannot find clear error.

Woodward also takes issue with the court leaving out what he sees as necessary factual details in its analysis—*e.g.*, the allegation that his co-defendant threatened him at gunpoint to participate in the crime; that his co-defendant was an adult at the time; and the evidence Woodward presented to explain his most recent institutional infraction. However, a trial court need not recite every piece of evidence in its opinion granting or denying a JUVRA motion. Here, the court admitted 48 pieces of evidence and multiple witnesses testified—“the circuit court, as the factfinder in th[e] case, [is] vested with the discretion to evaluate the evidence as it [sees] fit.” *Trimble*, 491 Md. at 421 (citation omitted). “[A] trial court is not obligated to recount every detail of its preceding analysis, ultimately

resolve every dispute of fact, or restate the weight ascribed to every factor.” *Id.* at 406–07 (quoting *Bishop v. United States*, 310 A.3d 629, 648 (D.C. 2024)). Again, Woodward’s argument would impose an unfounded restriction on the court’s broad discretion outlined in *Trimble*. So long as “there is any competent material evidence to support the factual findings” it does state in its opinion, we will not find error.

Finally, Woodward contends the court erred by stating Dr. Boss had not included Woodward’s infractions from 2006 and 2008 in her report. We agree with the State that Woodward has failed to assert any factual basis showing the court’s omission was material to its decision in denying his motion. To the contrary, the court’s finding under Factor 7—that Dr. Boss was not credible—appears to have been based on Dr. Boss’ methodology and contradictory evidence in the record, not her opinion on Woodward’s infraction history. Again, we find no error.

For the foregoing reasons, we affirm.<sup>4</sup>

**THE JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT  
COURT FOR BALTIMORE CITY IS  
AFFIRMED. APPELLANT TO PAY  
THE COSTS.**

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<sup>4</sup> As both parties acknowledge, under CP § 8-110(f)(1), Woodward may re-file a second motion under JUVRA in three years from the circuit court’s denial of his original motion.