



Law lets woman adopt her own children

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[Leah Hope](#)

July 5, 2011 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- A new adoption law in Illinois has legally reunited a woman and her children. It allows parents to regain custody of their children if they can prove to a court that their parental rights should be restored.

The new law involves cases where a relative who was given custody passes away. It has given one woman a second chance at legally being a mother to her children.

Each year, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services estimates 500 children in Illinois are orphaned when their adoptive parents die. In some cases, a grandparent may have stepped in when a parent could not care for the child. With the passing of the elderly relative, and the parent's restored ability to care for the child, a new law helps reunite parent and child legally.

Things weren't always so easy with Yolanda Miller and her kids. Drug addiction tore the family apart. She lost custody of 10 of her children and her mother stepped in.

"It wasn't my mom's job to raise my kids. That was my job. So I realized I needed to get my life together because my children needed me," Miller said.

It took time, but Miller got sober and spiritual.

All the while, Miller's children were growing and her mother getting frailer. When her mother died in 2005, Yolanda Miller was granted guardianship.

Just last week, after years of patience, Miller's parental rights were restored for four of her children, thanks to a new law.

"Anything is possible for those that believe, and I've always believed that I would get my children back once I got my life back together," said Miller.

Tuesday, Miller stood with those four children and some of her grandchildren at a press conference announcing the new law allowing adoption by a birth parent when the adoptive parent has died.

"Many judges are reluctant to restore rights to someone that another judge has taken them away from, but now there's a process in place that everyone can follow," said adoption attorney Linda Coon. "That's really been needed for a long time."

"Laws should fit people in their real lives," said Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, (D-Chicago). "I'm delighted this has become law and I'm hoping people become more aware of it so we can reunite more families who want to be together."

Two of Miller's daughters -- now in their 20s -- told reporters what this legal reunification means for their family.

"I know what we went through. But we're blessed. It's loving, it's strong. It's happy. We're happy. We're all happy. We always wanted to be with my mom," said daughter Rachelle Pouncey.

"I'm proud of my mom," said daughter Rashunda Pouncey. "I've always been proud. She always stuck by us no matter what she went through."

This law refers to cases where the adoptive parent who has died was a relative.

Before an adoption would be granted, DCFS would investigate and the court would appoint an attorney to represent the best interest of the child.

In Miller's case, the adoption of her other children is pending.

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