

# **DSWD reunites mother, three kids after 4 years under Gentle Hands custody**



After four years of separation, Ms. Monina Roxas is happy to be finally reunited with her three children on Thursday (July 6), which was made possible through the assistance of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local government unit (LGU) of Pasig City.

Monina's children were previously under the custody of Gentle Hands Inc., (GHI), the privately-run orphanage in Quezon City, which was shut down after the DSWD issued a cease-and-desist order for overcrowding and other safety issues.

Monina on Wednesday (July 5) told the Senate Committee on Women, Family Relations, and Gender Equality that GHI executive director Charity Graff had refused to return her three children to her custody despite the issuance of a Parental Capability Assessment Report (PCAR) by the Pasig City government.

She also told senators that GHI personnel prohibited her to visit her children, and was only able to see them three times since 2019.

The 30-year-old Ms. Monina expressed her gratitude to the DSWD for assisting her in taking custody of her children.

The three children, aged 10, 9, and 7, were among the more than 100 children who were taken by the DSWD from the GHI after the Department found various violations committed by the orphanage that led to the issuance of CDOs on May 22 and June 13, this year.

The children-residents who were pulled out from GHI were transferred to the three centers and residential care facilities (CRCFs) under the management of DSWD. These are the Elsie Gaches Village in Alabang, Muntinlupa City; Nayon ng Kabataan in Mandaluyong City and the Reception and Study Center for Children in Quezon City

Monina's three children were given shelter at the Nayon ng Kabataan in Mandaluyong City.

Monina was also one of the mothers who filed kidnapping charges against GHI for its refusal to return the children to their custody.

The DSWD, through Field Office – National Capital Region (NCR) Assistant Regional Director for Operations (ARDO) Miriam Navarro, assured Ms. Monina that the Department and the Pasig LGU will provide her and her children with necessary assistance, depending on the assessment of the social workers. The Pasig LGU said it will also look into linking her with other city programs, including possible job placement.

“Binabanggit namin sa iyo na not necessarily na turn over ito. Mayroon pa rin kaming task pero sila [Pasig LGU] pa rin ang magmamanager ng case mo. Sila rin naman ang makikipagcoordinate sa amin kapag mayroon pang ibang needs na yun nga, binabanggit natin na outside Pasig na pwedeng i-augment ng national, kami yon. Pwede pa rin kaming tumulong sa iyo. Hindi namin kino-close yung door namin sa iyo... Nandyang pa rin kami,” NCR-ARDO Navarro said.

(We are telling you that it is not necessarily a turn over. We still have a task but they [Pasig LGU] will be the one managing your case. They will also coordinate with us when there are other needs outside Pasig that can be augmented by the national. We can still help you. We are not closing our door for you... We will still provide assistance.)

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian had said that the Department continues to promote and protect the wellbeing and best interest of every Filipino child. #