

International Family Services

Complaint and Quality Improvement Policy and Procedures

Approved: June 26, 2008

Policy

It shall be the policy of International Family Services (IFS)

to permit any birth parent, prospective adoptive parent or adoptive parent, or adoptee to lodge directly with the agency or person signed and dated complaints about any of the services or activities of the agency or person (including its use of supervised providers) that he or she believes raise an issue of compliance with the Hague Convention, the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA), or the regulations implementing the IAA, and advises such individuals of the additional procedures available to them if they are dissatisfied International Family Services' response to their complaint;

to respond in writing to complaints received within thirty (30) days of receipt, and provide expedited review of such complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud;

to keep a written record of each complaint received and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and make this record available to the accrediting entity or the U.S. Department of State (USDOS) upon request;

to not take any action to discourage a client or prospective client from, or retaliate against a client or prospective client for:

- making a complaint;
- expressing a grievance;
- providing information in writing or interviews to an accrediting entity on the agency's or person's performance; or
- questioning the conduct of or expressing an opinion about the performance of IFS;

to provide to the accrediting entity and the USDOS, on a semi-annual basis, a summary of all complaints received during the preceding six months (including the number of complaints received and how each complaint was resolved) and an assessment of any discernible patterns in complaints received by IFS, along with information about what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by IFS in response to such patterns;

to provide any information about complaints received against IFS as may be requested by the accrediting entity or the USDOS;

to establish and maintain a quality improvement program appropriate to IFS's size and circumstances through which IFS will make systematic efforts to improve its adoption services as needed; and

to use appropriate quality improvement methods that may include reviewing complaint data, client satisfaction surveys, or comparative practice or performance data, or other techniques.

Procedures

IFS includes the following language in our adoption services agreement.

International Family Services (IFS) permits any birth parent, prospective adoptive parent or adoptive parent, or adoptee to lodge directly with IFS signed and dated complaints about any of the IFS services or activities (including its use of supervised providers) that he or she believes raise an issue of compliance with the Hague Adoption Convention, the U.S. Intercountry Adoption Act (2000), or the U.S. federal regulations (22 CFR 96) implementing the IAA.

Problems are routine in the process of international adoptions. IFS's program directors and staff are responsible for solving these problems as they arise. However, upon occasion problems that are under the control of IFS are not solved to the satisfaction of its client and others. This document outlines IFS's procedures for handling complaints.

1. Clients shall communicate, either orally or in writing, with their case manager about their complaint.
2. If it is not satisfactorily resolved, they may ask to discuss their concerns with their case manager's immediate supervisor.
3. The supervisor may then be able to resolve the issue. If not, the supervisor may ask that the client make a formal complaint in writing, signed and dated.
4. In response to a formal written complaint, IFS will internally review the grounds for the complaint and its possible resolution. IFS will make a formal response to the client with its proposed resolution within 30 days receipt of the written complaint. If the complaint is time-sensitive or involves allegations of fraud, then IFS will expedite the review process.
5. If the client is not satisfied with the resolution provided by IFS, they may pursue the following options.
 - a. The client may contact the Better Business Bureau dispute resolution as per the IFS contract.

The Better Business Bureau
1333 West Loop South, Suite 1200
Houston, Texas 77027
24-Hour Information: 713-868-9500
Fax: 713-867-4947
general e-mail: bbbinfo@bbbhouston.org

- b. If IFS conducted the home study, and the complaint concerns the conduct of that home study, the client can contact IFS's licensing body in the state where the home study was issued. For Texas,
Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
Residential Child Care Licensing
701 W 51st St, Austin, TX
(512) 438-3260

- c. The client may also submit complaints to the U.S. Department of State Complaint Registry.
<http://adoptionusca.state.gov/HCRWeb/WelcomeForm.aspx>

IFS records complaints

IFS uses a workgroup software package that centrally stores email correspondence with prospective adoptive parent(s). Complaints and IFS responses are stored in the email box of the services personnel who handled the complaints, from line staff to CEO.