



**Adoption ARK**  
**A Hague Accredited Agency**

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### **Client Policies and Procedures**

This is a “short” version of the original Policies and Procedures that was finalized and approved by the Adoption ARK Board of Directors in July 2007. These Policies and Procedures were drafted to satisfy all of the Hague Convention requirements of the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

#### **Introduction**

Adoption ARK is a certified 501c3, nonprofit adoption agency and is a licensed child welfare agency in Illinois (#429659-02). Our license permits us to conduct international and domestic services for families residing in the State of Illinois. In addition, Adoption ARK provides international adoption services for families living in all states. Adoption ARK is governed by The Adoption ARK Board of Directors.

#### **Our Mission**

Adoption ARK was founded to provide relief to orphans around the world. Primarily, Adoption ARK helps locate families for children available for adoption in countries other than the United States. Through our humanitarian efforts we provide orphans with basic necessities such as food, housing, education, medical care, etc...

#### **Agency Philosophy**

Adoption ARK believes it is every child’s right to have the love of a family. We believe that all qualified parents deserve the privilege of enriching their families through adoption.

International adoption is a complex process that requires knowledge of each country’s adoption requirements, education in child welfare and years of experience in completing adoptions from abroad. Our directors have years’ of experience in international adoption and our staff is mostly composed of Adoptive Families and adult adoptees. From beginning to end, we want to make each parent’s adoption journey a treasured memory.

Adoption ARK believes that the placement of children orphaned overseas and available for adoption by American families should be done in the best interests of the children and in full accordance and in compliance with the Hague Convention; all Federal and State laws, rules and regulations, as well as in accordance with the laws of the country of the child’s birth. We believe that adoption can be a great solution for an abandoned, orphaned child who is legally available and fully cleared for adoption in the country of his or her primary residence. Adoption ARK views inter-country adoption as a child welfare service that focuses first on the well-being of the child. Adoption ARK prohibits and condemns abduction, trafficking, exploitation or the selling of children.

## **Professional Ethics**

Adoption ARK provides adoption services in accordance with the Hague Convention principals to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child, and to preventing the abduction, exploitation, sale or trafficking of children.

All personal data gathered or transmitted in connection with an intercountry adoption is used only for the purposes for which the information was gathered. Adoption ARK practices due diligence to safeguard sensitive individual information.

## **Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Families**

### Age Requirements

- Applicants age 23-55 may apply for adoption at Adoption ARK. Age requirements vary for each country and may be adjusted depending on the age of the child a parent wishes to adopt. Older applicants may apply on a case-by-case basis.
- Single applicants must be at least 25 years old according to the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services.

### Family Status Requirements

- Only married couples and single women may apply for international adoption.
- Adoption ARK is unaware of any foreign country that knowingly places a child with a gay or lesbian person.
- While many countries allow for single women to adopt, it may be difficult to find a country permitting adoption by single men.

### Health Status

- Applicants must be in good physical, emotional and mental health.
- Adopting parents must provide written statements from their physician endorsing them as Adoptive Families.
- Applicants must be free of communicable disease and should not be diagnosed with any life threatening illness.
- Health limitations will be reviewed and submitted for approval to a foreign government on a case-by-case basis.

### Criminal History

- Adopting parents must submit to background checks by local, state and federal authorities.
- Applicants must disclose any criminal record and acceptance in the adoption program will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Applicants with a criminal record must provide Adoption ARK a copy of the court transcript. Some countries require NO ARREST RECORD with the FBI.
- Applicants cannot have ANY history with Child Protective Services.

### Citizenship Requirements

- For parents residing in the United States, one or both adoptive parent must have United States Citizenship.
- Parents residing outside the United States and without United States citizenship are subject to their country's adoption laws and regulations.

### Insurance

- Adopting parents should have medical insurance that can be extended to the adoptive child after they enter the United States.
- Life insurance coverage is strongly recommended.

Eligibility is ultimately determined by the social worker who conducts the Home Study for the adopting parents and by the country that parents choose for their adoption. Above is a list of general requirements. These requirements are set forth to ensure that everything is done in the best interest of the child. Additional information may be needed to complete the adoption process.

### **Training Requirements**

Adoption ARK requires 10 hours of training for prospective adoptive families. The training should address:

- The intercountry adoption process, the general characteristics and needs of children awaiting adoption, and the intercountry conditions that affect children in the Hague Convention country from which the prospective adoptive parent(s) plan to adopt.
- The effects on children of malnutrition, relevant environmental toxins, maternal substance abuse, and of any other known genetic, health, emotional, and developmental risk factors associated with children from the expected country of origin.
- Information about the impact on a child of leaving familiar ties and surroundings, as appropriate to the expected age of the child.
- Data on institutionalized children and the impact of institutionalization on children, including the effect on children of the length of time spent in an institution and the type of care provided in the expected country of origin.
- Information on attachment disorders and other emotional problems that institutionalized or traumatized children and children with a history of multiple caregivers may experience, before and after the adoption.
- Information on the laws and adoption processes of the expected country of origin, including foreseeable delays and impediments to finalization of an adoption.
- Information on the long term implication for a family that has become multicultural through intercountry adoption.
- An explanation of any reporting requirements associated with Hague Convention adoptions, including any Post Placement / Post Adoption reports required by the expected country of origin.

Adoption ARK also provides the prospective adoptive parent(s) with the materials and resources on:

- The child's history and cultural, racial, religious, ethnic, and linguistic background.
- The known health risks in the specific region or country where the child resides.
- Any other medical, social, background, birth history, educational data, development history, or any other data known about the particular child.

Adoption ARK provides instruction through appropriate methods, including:

- Collaboration among agencies or persons to share resources to meet the training needs of prospective adoptive parents.
- Group seminars offered by Adoption ARK or other agencies training entities.
- Individual social service sessions.
- Video, computer-assisted, or distance learning methods using standardized curricula.
- In cases where training cannot be otherwise provided, an extended Home Study process, with a system for evaluating the thoroughness with which the topics have been covered.

Adoption ARK provides individualized social services and preparation, as needed, to meet the needs of the prospective adoptive parent(s) in light of the particular child to be adopted and his or her special needs and any other training or counseling needed in light of the child background study or the Home Study.

- Adoption ARK provides the prospective adoptive parent(s) with information about print, internet, and other resources available for continuing to acquire information about common behavioral, medical, and other issues, connecting with parent support groups, adoption clinics and experts, and seeking appropriate help when needed.
- The Adoption ARK exempts prospective adoptive parent(s) from all or part of the training and preparation that would normally be required for a specific adoption only when the Department of Child and Family Services of Illinois, also known as DCFS, determines that the prospective adoptive parent(s) have received adequate prior training or have prior experience as parent(s) of children adopted from abroad.
- DCFS records the nature and extent of the training and preparation provided to the prospective adoptive parent(s) in the adoption record.

### **Supervised Providers**

Adoption ARK establishes a Supervised Provider Agreement according to the requirements of the Hague Convention in respect to Intercountry Adoption.

### **Disruption of Adoption**

**Disruption of the adoption is to discontinue the adoption process after the child enters the United States but before the adoption is finalized in the state of the adoptive parent's residence.**

Adoption ARK is not authorized to take custody of children placed through adoption. However, Adoption ARK can assist in locating services. Adoption ARK will establish a process in the event that we begin working in a country where this scenario is possible.

### **Dissolution of Adoption**

**Dissolution of adoption is to legally revoke your rights to an adopted child after the adoption is finalized.**

Adoptions are legally binding when adoptions are finalized in the foreign countries and approved by the official organizations and courts of those nations with which we work. When adopted in a foreign country, the child boards the plane with his adoptive parents heading for the United States; this adopted child is already "Officially Adopted" and bears his adoptive parents' name. The adoption is final; there are no contingencies to such adoptions.

Adoption ARK will provide the Adoptive Family with referrals for counseling to keep the current placement. If counseling fails the family needs to find an independent agency or attorney to do dissolution and assist with new placement. Adoption ARK will help to assist with locating a new family but is not obligated to do so.

### **Record Disclosures**

It is the policy of Adoption ARK to comply with, and to require its employees to comply with, the Hague Convention, the 2006 Intercountry Adoption Act "the IAA", the Illinois state law, Adoption ARK regulations, and other applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to disclosure of Adoption records. Therefore, all adoption records are retained in a secure location and all non-identifiable information will be disclosed to adoptee or adoptive parents in a timely manner.

### **Charitable Donations**

No client, employee, agent or affiliate of Adoption ARK is obligated to donate. Donations do not influence child placement decisions in any way and donations made are unknown to the parent coordinator. Clients in the adoption process may only donate for specific programs. A portion of

Adoption ARK's revenue is given to charitable programs through our humanitarian aid organization, ARK Mission. We frequently add our humanitarian projects to the Adoption ARK website and to an emailed newsletter. Adoptive parents should not misconstrue this as solicitation.

### **Information Disclosure**

The following information is available upon request:

- The number of adoption placements per year for the previous 3 years, as well as the number and percentages that remain intact, are disrupted, or have been dissolved.
- The number of parents who apply to adopt per year for the previous three years.

The following information is given to clients upon initial contact with Adoption ARK employee:

- The various international placing programs that Adoption ARK has to offer and eligibility criteria for each program;
- The basic processes, procedures, and documentation needed for international adoption per each country's program;
- IL State and USCIS requirements for international adoption and how to get started with these agencies;
- The major risks involved regarding the medical and emotional status of the children as particular to each country;
- Fees involved for each program;
- The Home Study process in general and particularly through Adoption ARK, if a client resides outside of Illinois, Adoption ARK consultant can provide them with list of Supervised Providers in the state of residence; as approved by Adoption ARK's executive directors.
- Adoption ARK will include information about Foreign Supervised Providers and their fees once programs in the Hague Convention countries are established through Supervised Provider;
- The Home Study and program application process fees through Adoption ARK of Illinois;
- Sample Adoption Agreement.

### **Adoption ARK Fees**

All families have the right to know all possible adoption fees before signing the Adoption Agreement.

A portion of adoption fees will be used to support Adoption ARK's humanitarian aid efforts. Current humanitarian aid projects can be seen at [www.arkmission.org](http://www.arkmission.org) or may be requested from Adoption ARK.

There are other expenses that need to be taken into consideration when budgeting for international adoption. These expenses are not included in the Adoption Agreement and will be paid to each separate entity by Adoptive Parents. Listed below are estimated additional expenses. These costs vary greatly depending on the Adoptive Parents' particular situation and the country they choose to adopt from. All estimated expenses are outlined in Adoption ARK's Welcome Package and disclosed upon initial contact.

Please see the International Adoption Service Fees Chart on the next page.

| <b>International Program</b>   | <b>Bulgaria</b>                   | <b>Hungry</b>                     | <b>Kazakhstan</b> | <b>Nepal</b> | <b>Russia</b> | <b>Ukraine</b> | <b>Ghana</b> | <b>Azerbaijan</b> | <b>Ethiopia</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Application Fee</b><br>Initial client eligibility screening and consultations   | \$0                               | \$0                               | \$0               | \$0          | \$0           | \$0            | \$0          | \$0               | \$0             |
| <b>Agency &amp; Dossier Documentation Fee</b><br>Initial Dossier documents and Agency Fee  | \$3,000<br>(\$1000 w/<br>dossier) | \$3,000<br>(\$1000 w/<br>dossier) | \$3,000           | \$3,000      | \$3,000       | \$3,000        | \$3,000      | \$3,000           | \$3000          |
| <b>Dossier Preparation Fee</b><br>Dossier preparation assistance and review  | \$2,500                           | \$2,500                           | \$2,500           | \$2,500      | \$2,500       | \$2,500        | \$2,500      | \$2,500           | \$2,500         |
| <b>Dossier Processing Fee</b><br>Translation and submission  | \$2000 (Paid<br>directly)         | \$2,200                           | \$3,400           | \$2400       | \$3800        | \$1000         | \$4,000      | \$7,500           | \$1,500         |
| <b>Country Assignment Fee</b><br>Includes administrative overheads, operational cost, communications, publications, care for the child, medical cost, foster or orphanage care | \$500                             | \$2,300                           | \$2,300           | \$5000       | \$1200        | \$500          | \$3,000      | \$7,000           | \$1,000         |
| <b>Intermediate City Assistance Fee</b><br>Including Driver, translator, coordinator assistance in transitional city, consulate, medical appointments assistance               | \$0                               | \$0                               | \$400             | \$0          | \$2000        | \$500          | \$0          | \$0               | \$0             |
| <b>Regional Assistance Fee</b><br>including foreign fees, drivers translation, legalization of documents, personnel, legalization and translation of post adoption documents   | \$7500                            | \$5,500                           | \$12,300          | \$10,600     | \$15,000      | \$15000        | \$2000       | \$7,500           | \$5,500         |
| <b>Total</b>   | \$15,500                          | \$15,500                          | \$23,900          | \$23,500     | \$27,500      | \$22,500       | \$14,500     | \$27,500          | \$13,500        |

## **General Description of Programs Supported by Agency funds**

Adoption ARK is a non-profit, charitable foundation and child welfare agency licensed in Illinois (license # 429659-01) that provides help to orphans. We are dedicated to improve lives of orphans around the world. A list of the programs we support can be found in our introductory information, on the ARK mission website, or is available by request. Adoption ARK is proud of our contributions to orphans abroad and we enjoy sharing our efforts with ARK Families and Friends. Humanitarian aid projects include but are not limited to:

- **Assistance with adoption of older children**
  - Since most families desire to adopt children younger than 5 years, our mission is to find families for children who are older than 5 years of age. Adoption ARK has a grant program for children over the age of 5 years old. An addendum to the original adoption agreement will be used to reflect any changes in the adoption service fees.
- **Assistance with adoption of special needs children**
  - Adoption ARK offers grants to families requesting a referral for a special needs child. We found a loving family for Nastya, who has severe burns; we found a forever family for Marina, a little girl that had problems with her eyes; and we helped a family adopt Alex, with a cleft lip and palate. Adoption ARK has a large special needs adoption program dedicated to the placement of children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and other special needs that would normally make a child difficult to place with a family.
- **Holiday donations**

Adoption ARK provides financial assistance to orphanages during the holiday season. For example, seven orphanages in Kazakhstan received monetary donations from Adoption ARK during Christmas 2008. These donations are used for a holiday party, gifts, fruit and cake and all goes to support Christmas for the children.
- **Mongolia**

Adoption ARK helps children with brain paralysis from Kindergarten No. 10 and Special Secondary School No. 25. On the basis of the Hague Convention Principle of Warm Home and Parents' Love for Every Child, we focus on assistance and support of children with brain paralysis and socially vulnerable children in Mongolia.
- **Nepal**

Adoption ARK sponsors the Balmandir Orphanage, housing 700 children. Currently we are working on a program supporting the distribution of milk to children of this orphanage to ensure age appropriate amounts of calcium intake. Elena Karadjova, the Executive Director, also visited many villages housing people with low socioeconomic status. With the help of volunteers, she handed out candy, school supplies, toys, and noodles to the children living there.
- **Healthy teeth, Nepal project**

A dental camp on the premise of NCO, Nepal was successfully organized in 2008. The sole financial supporter of the program was the Adoption ARK, USA. Two pharmaceutical companies Deurali Janta and TIMES provided medicine for the program. It was organized with the help of four dentists from 'Dental Clinic', Hattisar and 19 volunteers. The whole program was coordinated by Miss Anima Bhattachan, a current volunteer of NCO. The dental camp was effectively and efficiently conducted in the presence of Mrs. Reeta Singh Baidhya, Chairperson of NCO; NCO staff, and Adoption ARK's Nepali representative. After the examination, tooth extractions, tooth care, hygiene instructions, and refreshments were distributed among the children, doctors, guests and volunteers. 183 children were examined at the day of the dental camp.
- **Medical assistance**

Adoption ARK provides medical assistance to the orphans. Gala, from Kazakhstan, had eye surgery and received aftercare treatment. Adoption ARK helped Asya, from Russia, receive an evaluation for possible surgery for esophagus defect. Adoption ARK received a request for

orphan Azamat, in Kazakhstan, to correct his crossed eyes. These surgeries were a success! In addition, we sponsored a child from Priluki orphanage with Celiac disease, organized surgery for Denis, in Ukraine, to correct his club foot and funded corrective procedures for many other children. Adoption ARK also donated equipment and medication to children's hospitals in Ukraine and Russia, and has often supplied special bottles to help feed children with clefts and CP.

- **Save a Child's Life Project**  
Supports orphaned children in Russia with Leukemia.
- **Summer Programs**  
Adoption ARK sponsored summer camps for kids in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The 2004 and 2005 programs were here in the United States and hosted orphans from Russia and Ukraine. The Summer Programs of 2006 and 2007 were held in the Ivanovo region of Russia. The Ivanovo program brought together 120 kids, ages 6 to 16, from 9 orphanages of the Ivanovo region and their caretakers, student team leaders, organizations of the camp from Russia side, the representatives of Friends Around the World (non-profit organization based in Russia) and Adoption ARK/ARK Mission representatives and volunteers. Adoption ARK sponsored the camp and provided toys, clothing, and nutritious food to all kids in the camp.
- **Martial Arts School, Russia**  
Adoption ARK sponsored a Martial Arts School in Russia. The orphanage employers found two amazing men who decided to spend their time setting up martial arts classes, especially Tae Kwon Do and Karate classes. The program started in 2004 and was a success.
- **Undergarment drive, 2007**  
Children need undergarments as a necessity and basic hygiene precaution. As a result, we have purchased and also received many packages of undergarments! The boxes of girls and boys undergarments were shipped to the Russian orphanages.
- **Window Replacement Project in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, 2007-2008**  
The baby house in Karaganda, Kazakhstan is home to 100 children, from age newborn to 4 years old. This orphanage approached us with an urgent need. The building is very old and most of the windows are cracked, broken or are not working properly. Subsequently, the baby house is cold and drafty causing the children frequent illness. We are in the process of replacing the windows for the entire baby house.
- **Safe Place to Play**  
Adoption ARK has built playgrounds for orphanages in Russia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. For example, Adoption ARK provided playground equipment to several orphanages in Ivanovo, Russia. This is an ongoing project.
- **Beds for Tots in Dzeskazgan, Kazakhstan**  
The Zhezkazan orphanage director requested funds to purchase new beds; hence "Beds for Tots" project. Adoption ARK purchased 50 new beds for the children that have moved out of cribs, approximate age 2-6. Based on market value in the local shops, beds are estimated at \$150-\$160.
- **Annual Party**  
Adoption ARK organized our first annual party in December 2006. We were fortunate to have 150 children in attendance, of which 65 children were adopted. It was a wonderful experience where parents met with others who adopted in foreign countries.
- **Adoption ARK picnics:**  
We sponsored picnics in California, Illinois and Texas for those families who adopted their children with help of Adoption ARK in 2007, 2008 and in January, 2009.

Adoption ARK is trying to help as many children as possible who reside in needy countries. We hope that we live up to our 501c3 status and we are very proud to be working as a non-profit organization.

**Home Study Fees**

- \$2,580 for clients who are working with Adoption ARK for Home Studies and international adoption (Application included, as well as the one month and six month post placement fee—one year, two year, and three year post placement are not included).
- \$3,580 for families who use the Home Study department for their Home Studies, but do not follow up with international adoption using Adoption ARK.(This fee does not include any post placement fees.)
- Fees for Supervised Providers will be included upon finalization of list of
- Supervised Providers

\*Each post placement fee for families using Adoption ARK as a placing agency is \$250; each post placement fee for families using other placing agencies is \$300

**Post Placement / Post Adoption Report**

The Post-Placement / Post- Adoption Report is due in Adoption ARK’s office no later than 1 week before the due date. Adoptive Family will be charged \$10 per day for each past due day. The family is required to submit two originals and two copies of the report. Each original must have an original notary and apostille. Adoption ARK reserves the right to pay for Post Placement / Post Adoption reports directly to the Post Placement / Post Adoption Reports agency or Social Worker and, if required to do so, will also charge a fee for arranging this service. The family will be offered a due date for shipment of Post Placement / Post Adoption Reports by Adoption ARK to Russia in order to save money for the family, however, should the Adoptive Family miss this date they will be charged \$25 for shipment.

**Disclaimer:** Adoptive Family may be entitled to a refund of the payment made to Adoption ARK based on the Refund Policy. At no point shall Adoption ARK be required to refund fees not directly paid to Adoption ARK, or to be required to reimburse for any third party expenses (hotel, airfares, food, cabs, etc).

**Post Placement / Post Adoption Report Guidelines**

| Country           | Number of Reports   | Family Generated or Social Worker Generated   | Specific Report Form        | Authentication Requirements                     | Number of Pictures Required |
|-------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Russia</b>     | 4 reports at 5 mo, 11 mo, 23 mo and 35 mo (3 originals + 2 copies of each report) | All reports are done by SW of licensed Agency   | Yes, available upon request | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 3 sets of 7-10 color photos |
| <b>Kazakhstan</b> | Once a year till the child is 18 years old. One original + one copy               | First 4 reports must be done by SW  | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 1 set of 7-10 color photos  |
| <b>Ukraine</b>    | All annual letters are due till the child turns 18<br>1 original + 1 copy         | All country reports are family generated. AA requires 2 reports by HS agency as specified in agreement. | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 1 set of 7-10 color photos  |

|                   |   |  |                             |   |                             |
|-------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Bulgaria</b>   | 6 months<br>12 months<br>18 months<br>24 months<br>2 originals + 1 copy   | All reports done by SW   | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 2 sets of 8-10 color photos |
| <b>Hungary</b>    | 6 months<br>12 months<br>2 originals + 1 copy   | All reports done by SW   | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 2 sets of 7-10 color photos |
| <b>Ethiopia</b>   | 3 country reports in the first year at 3 mo, 6 mo, and 1 year. Annual report through the 18 <sup>th</sup> year, 1 original + 1 copy | First 3 reports must be done by SW, all other reports are family generated | Yes, available upon request | All reports have to be notarized                | 1 set of 7-10 color photos  |
| <b>Ghana</b>      | Annual report through the 18 <sup>th</sup> year<br>1 original + 1 copy  | First 4 reports must be done by SW, all other reports are family generated | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized                | 1 set of 7-10 color photos  |
| <b>Azerbaijan</b> | 5 reports due at 5 months, 11 months, 18 months, 23 months, and 35 months from the court date.                                      | All reports must be done by a SW   | n/a                         | All reports have to be notarized and apostilled | 2 sets of 7-10 color photos |
|                   |   |  |                             |   |                             |

### **Internet Confidentiality**

While the Internet can be a wonderful source of information and opportunity for sharing during your adoption, we request that you be very careful about posting particulars about your adoption on the Internet. In the past, when private discussions about what is going on in China, Ethiopia, Russia, Guatemala, Vietnam, Brazil, India, or any country about a particular adoption have been posted on the Internet, it has often resulted in confusion and misinformation. Please be very careful and very selective about posting anything on the Internet. Also, when you read anything on the Internet about adoption, even when from parents who have completed their adoption or from other sources, do not assume it to be factual. When you have questions because of something you read on the Internet, please ask us.

**Please refrain from discussing details of your adoption case on the internet. Foreign Countries consider the adoption proceedings to be highly confidential and doing so could jeopardize your adoption and the other adoptions of other Adoption ARK clients. For this reason, Adoption ARK has set up a confidential newsgroup. Although we limit our participation to provide an open forum for adoptive parents, Adoption ARK strictly monitors membership and it is open only to Adoption ARK clients. This provides a safe environment for adoptive parents to freely discuss their adoption and ask questions.**

### **I. Complaint Policy and Procedure**

We anticipate a smooth working relationship with you. However, occasional misunderstandings may arise. If they do, we strongly encourage you to give us a call so that we can address your concerns. If you are not satisfied with our response, you have the right to launch the complaint process. Adoption ARK does not retaliate in any way for reported grievances or complaints. It is

our desire to work through any differences that may arise and move forward in our relationship with our clients.

A copy of Adoption ARK's Complaint Procedure is located in the initial information sent to all prospective clients, is located on our website at <http://www.adoptionark.org/public/pag11.aspx>, and is part of the adoption agreement entered into by Adoptive Parents and Adoption ARK. It is required that the Policies and Procedures of Adoption ARK, which contains the full complaint procedure, must be signed by all Adoptive Parents entering into an adoption agreement with Adoption ARK.

### **Complaint Policy Overview**

1. It is the policy of Adoption ARK to comply with, and to require its employees to comply with, the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (hereafter the Hague Convention), the 2006 Intercountry Adoption Act (the IAA), the state law, Adoption ARK regulations and other applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to filing, addressing, investigating, and resolving complaints in regards to Adoption ARK adoption services.
2. Adoption ARK supports the principle that all customer complaints should be viewed and taken positively.
3. Adoption ARK ensures that all complaints will be treated seriously and dealt properly with an emphasis on the honest and thorough process of consideration, with the prime aim of satisfying the concerns of the complainant.
4. All written complaints received will be registered within 2 days and a response provided within 10 days.
5. Adoption ARK has an established mechanism for responding to and keeping a record of those complaints and findings of investigation.
6. In cases that involve allegations of fraud or time-sensitive issues Adoption ARK is obliged to provide expedited review of such complaints.
7. An allegation of any employee, supervised provider, or board member suspected of child selling will be given immediate consideration.
8. Adoption ARK guarantees that all records, information, organizational reports and summaries regarding received complaints will be available for the accrediting entity or other governmental authorities upon their request.
9. Adoption ARK pursues a no discouragement/no retaliation policy meaning that Adoption ARK employees and board members are prohibited from discouraging clients from filing a complaint and may not retaliate against a client or prospective client who filed such a complaint.
10. Anonymous complaints cannot be given consideration.
11. Adoption ARK believes that complaints can be a way to learn where and how the adoption service can be improved. Therefore, Adoption ARK develops and implements its own adoption services quality improvement program based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of Adoption ARK actions and performances.
12. Present complaint policy provisions are open to the public and available in electronic and hard copy versions. It is necessary for all Adoption ARK clients to be familiarized with these provisions before signing the contract with the agency. Adoption ARK can also provide a copy of the complaint procedure in Spanish.

## **Complaint Procedures**

Adoption ARK hereby establishes the following procedures:

- (I) Identification of a complaint
- (II) Addressing the complaint
- (III) Retention of complaints received by the agency

Complaint procedures are written in accordance with the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the 2006 Intercountry Adoption Act, and Illinois State Law.

### **I. Identification of the complaint**

1. What is considered to be “a complaint”?

A complaint is a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the adoption services of Adoption ARK. A complaint becomes a formal investigation upon receiving a signed and dated expression of dissatisfaction according to the guidelines contained herein.

2. Who has the right to complain?

Any direct or indirect client of Adoption ARK including but not limited to birth parents, prospective adoptive parents, adoptive parents and adoptee have a right to bring a complaint about any issues of Adoption ARK compliance with state law, the Hague convention, the IAA, or regulations of implementing IAA.

- a) A complaint can be filed on behalf of birth parents, prospective adoptive parents, adoptive parents, adoptee or any other client of Adoption ARK by their legal representative(s) after providing evidences that such representations is in compliance with law.

3. What is the form of the complaint?

A formal complaint should be in writing, signed, and dated.

4. What information is to be provided in a complaint?

- a) All the facts on which the complaint is based should be explained; if it is necessary, the complaint should be in chronological order.
- b) A complaint should be as detailed as possible and contains all information relevant to the case. For example, to substantiate a complaint the following information can be included: a description of alleged violation(s), date of violation, place, and if possible, the provisions of the Hague Convention (or other related legal documents) that were allegedly violated.
- c) The complainant’s full name, present address, mailing address, and fax/phone must be provided.
- d) In addition, all documents (copies) of relevance to the complaint can be supplied.

5. At what point can a formal complaint be filed?

A complaint can be filed within thirty (30) days of the incident or violation.

6. Where does a complainant send a written complaint?

Adoption ARK encourages complainants to use a traceable mail service to file a complaint. Complaints received by fax and email will be accepted but, to insure the complaint is authentic, must be signed and dated. Complainant will receive verification that complaint was received. Please use the address below when mailing a complaint.

Adoption ARK  
830 S. Buffalo Grove Road #103  
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

## **II. Addressing the complaint**

1. The Adoption ARK Complaint Department (Executive Director, CEO, and Director of International Operations) will initiate investigation of written complaint within two (2) business days of receipt of written complaint.
2. The investigation of a complaint is to be finalized within ten (10) business days after complaint is received. The investigation includes:
  - a. Thorough consideration of the complaint, all circumstances connected to complaint, hearing of the evidences of sides of conflict situation, witnesses if there were any, evaluation of the circumstances of the case, and character of the violation(s) in accordance with the Convention, the IAA and other acting laws.
  - b. A complaint investigator will interview all parties involved in the complaint.
  - c. All parties have the opportunity to suggest remediation.
  - d. Within 10 working days of receiving a complaint, the investigator will prepare a written decision summarizing the facts and issues involved and determine their findings based on these issues. The decision will be sent to the applicant, his/her representative (if any), and the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in Illinois. If extenuating circumstances exist which require additional time for resolution, an interim report shall still be provided to the complaining party and to DCFS at the ten (10) day point. The interim report shall include the reason for the delay and an estimated date of completion of the investigation and response. The interim report to DCFS shall include a copy of the written complaint. A final report shall be provided at the conclusion of the investigation
  - e. If a director or CEO of the agency is involved in the complaint or is the adoption parent coordinator, the review of complaint investigation will be done by the Board of Directors of the agency.
  - f. In the case of urgency, sensitivity of the case, or alleged fraud, Adoption ARK provides expedited review of complaints. The matter of urgency and/or sensitivity is determined by Adoption ARK's Executive Director, the CEO, or, if applicable, the Adoption ARK board of directors.
  - g. The findings and resolution of the complaint is sent to the applicant and his/her representative (if any) by certified mail, immediately after conclusion.
  - h. The resolutions of all complaints shall be reported to Adoption ARK's Board of Directors and will include copies of the written complaint and the agency's written response. The reports of complaint resolutions that are made to Boards of Directors will be reflected in the minutes of the meetings.
  - i. Adoption ARK will advise the clients about other procedures available to them in case they are dissatisfied with the decision of the agency.
  - j. Adoption ARK will provide access to the information (when it is available in accordance with retention of complaints rules) regarding a complaint in case the complainant would attempt further actions to get satisfaction beyond procedures of Adoption ARK agency.

### **III. Retention of complaints**

1. The record of the complaint is filed in the Complaint Records folder.
2. The term of keeping a complaint record is five years.
3. The responsibility of managing the Complaint Records folder is upon employees of Adoption ARK Headquarters in Buffalo Grove, IL.
4. The staff of Adoption ARK ensures that personal data gathered or transmitted in connection with an adoption is used only for the purposes for which the information was gathered and safeguards sensitive individual information.

**Illinois Adoption Agency Information and Complaint Registry.** The State of Illinois Adoption Agency Information and Complaint Registry serves to assist the public in the monitoring of licensed child welfare agencies. You may access information concerning the past history and records of any licensed child welfare agency providing adoption services in Illinois through the DCFS registry's toll-free telephone number (1-866-730-5110). Information shall also be available on the DCFS website, <http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>.

### **Prohibition on Child Buying:**

Adoption ARK prohibits its employees and agents from giving money or other consideration, directly or indirectly, to a child's parent(s), other individual(s), or an entity as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child. Adoption ARK remits reasonable payments for activities related to the adoption proceedings, pre-birth medical costs, the care of the child, the care of the birth mother while pregnant and immediately following birth of the child, or the provision of child welfare and child protection services generally.

### **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

Adoption ARK does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, marital status, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

### **Preferential Treatment**

Adoption ARK does not give preferential treatment to its board members, contributors, volunteers, employees, agents, consultants, or independent contractors with respect to the placement of children for adoption.