



**Adoption ARK**  
**A Hague Accredited Agency**  
Illinois Licensed Child Welfare Agency, # 429659-02  
830 Buffalo Grove Road, Suite 103  
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089  
t. (847) 215-2755, f. (847) 215- 2757

www.adoptionark.org

Email: adopt@adoptionark.org

## **Adoption ARK's Grievance Procedure**

We anticipate a smooth working relationship with you. However, occasional misunderstandings may arise. If the Adoptive Family is dissatisfied with services, they are encouraged to resolve the situation directly with the staff person involved. If this effort is unsuccessful, the Adoptive Family should request a meeting or phone conference with the supervisor who will attempt to resolve the situation. If this effort is unsuccessful, Adoptive Family may use the complaint procedure outlined below.

Adoption ARK approved the following complaint procedures because it is our desire to work through any differences that may arise and move forward in our relationship with our clients.

### **Complaint Procedures**

Adoption ARK hereby establishes the following procedures for:

- a) (I) the identification, (II) addressing, and (III) retention of complaints received by the agency pertaining to provided adoption services and other related activities; and
- b) the order of submission of records, summaries and other information to governmental authorities including the accrediting entity.

Present procedures are written in accordance with Hague Convention, IAA, and state law.

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

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

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the adoption services of Adoption ARK requiring a response.

#### **2. Eligibility to lodge complaints/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's compliance with state law, the Hague Convention, the IAA or regulations implementing the IAA.

A complaint may be filed on behalf of birth parents, prospective adoptive parents, Adoptive Families, adoptee or any other client of Adoption ARK by their legal representative(s) after providing evidence that such representation is in compliance with law.

#### **3. Form of the complaint**

The complaint must be in writing, signed, and dated. The follow-up actions will be taken only after complainant submits formal written complaint.

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

All the facts on which the claim is based should be set out; if it is necessary it ought to be done in chronological order. A crucial requirement is that the account is as complete as possible and that the complaint contains all information relevant to the case. For example, to substantiate a complaint the following information may be included:

- description of alleged violation(s)
- date
- place
- if it is possible, provisions of the Hague Convention (or other related legal documents) that were allegedly violated.

Personal information of the complainant must be provided as well, including:

- full name
- date of birth
- nationality/citizenship
- marital status
- profession/occupation
- present address
- mailing address
- fax/phone.

In addition, all documents (copies) of relevance to the complaint should be supplied.

### **5. When can a formal complaint be filed?**

The formal complaint must be sent to Adoption ARK within 30 days of the occurrence of the incident and/or illegal action. Adoption ARK will accept complaints about any activities or services of the agency, its agents, employees, supervised domestic or foreign providers that raise an issue of compliance with the Hague Convention, the IAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA at any time without deadline or any other limitations.

### **6. Where to send written complaints?**

All complaints must be sent to:

***Adoption ARK Complaint Department***

*830 S. Buffalo Grove Road #103*

*Buffalo Grove, IL 60089*

## **II. Addressing clients' complaints**

### **1. Initiation of the investigation in respect to received complaint**

Complaints will be addressed according to the following order:

- If the Adoptive Family is dissatisfied with services, they are encouraged to resolve the situation directly with the staff person involved. If this effort is unsuccessful, the Adoptive Family should request a meeting or phone conference with the supervisor who will attempt to resolve the situation.
- If the above effort is unsuccessful, a written description of the basis for the complaint should be made to the Complaint Department (Executive Director, CEO, and Director of International Operations). The Complaint Department will launch an investigation within 2 days and will respond in 10 days.
- If the Adoptive Family remains dissatisfied with the response of the Complaint Department, they may request reconsideration by writing to the President of the Board of Directors of Adoption ARK. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors will meet and attempt to resolve the complaint within 30 days of receipt and will respond in writing.
- Should Adoption ARK agree with the Complaint of the Adoptive Family, such actions will take place to resolve the issue within 10 days of agreeing.

Should the complaint concern the Executive Director or CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the President of the Board of Directors. The Adoption ARK Complaint Department (or Board President in the

event the complaint is against the Executive Director) will immediately investigate the facts of the complaint and respond to each complaint in writing within 30 days of receipt of such complaint.

## **2. The tenure of the investigation**

The investigation of a complaint will be finalized within thirty (30) business days after complaint is received.

## **3. What does the investigation include?**

An investigation will include:

- a thorough consideration of the complaint, all circumstances connected to the complaint
- hearing of the evidence of both sides of the conflict, including witnesses, if there are any
- evaluation of the circumstances of the case and character of the violation(s) in accordance with the Hague Convention, the IAA, and other applicable laws.

Individuals are encouraged to use this complaint procedure without fear of retaliation. Adoption ARK will take no action to discourage a complaint or to retaliate against any person making a complaint, expressing a grievance, questioning the conduct of, or expressing an opinion about the performance of, Adoption ARK and its services and staff.

To insure that a client is not discouraged from questioning the conduct of or expressing an opinion about the performance of the agency, all communication with a client who has filed a complaint must be in writing. If a client received any pressure from the agency staff not to file a complaint, a client has a right to report such action by writing directly to the CEO. The CEO will call a meeting and disciplinary action will be taken against an employee who violated Complaint Policy Article 8. Such action may include a warning, suspension, or firing of an employee.

The Executive Director may transfer the case to another case worker if the complaint involves actions of the case worker for the case in progress.

All employees receive training regarding non-discrimination policy during initial orientation. The client is advised about “no retaliation against the complaint” policy in the Agency Policies and Procedures (Welcome Package and Adoption ARK website).

If the director of the agency is a case worker, the review of a grievance will be conducted by the Board of Directors of the agency.

## **4. Expedite review of complaints**

In case of urgency, sensitivity of the case or fraud, Adoption ARK provides expedited review of complaints. The matter of urgency and/or sensitivity is determined by the members of the Complaint Department.

## **5. Response to a filed complaint**

The decision will be sent to the applicant, his/her representative, if any, by email or postal mail, immediately after the decision.

## **6. Procedures for responding to the complaint related to approval or disapproval for placement**

Adoption ARK will provide the applicant with written notification of approval or disapproval for placement. Such a decision will be made only after pre-adoption assessment is completed. No approvals will be issued until Adoption ARK receives a criminal record check on the prospective Adoptive Family.

If the applicant is not approved, Adoption ARK will provide the client with factors that played part in the decision. Adoption ARK will inform the applicant in writing of the agency's grievance review procedure and the right of an applicant to file a grievance with the agency within 30 days of the receipt of a disapproval letter. If the grievance concerns an action based on the FBI criminal record, Adoption ARK will comply with procedures set by Illinois state law and Federal law. All other complaints will be handled by the same procedures.

### **7. Further actions**

Adoption ARK will advise the clients regarding other procedures available to them if they are dissatisfied with the decision of the agency.

If the complaint concerns or raises an issue of compliance with The Hague Convention or the United States implementing statutes and regulations, any person dissatisfied with the resolution of the complaint may take further action.

The complainant may request reconsideration by writing to the President of the Board of Directors. If the Board of Directors does not respond within 30 days, the complainant may submit a complaint to the Department of State's Complaint Registry in electronic format. The complaining person may lodge a complaint with the Hague Complaint Registry in accordance with Hague Regulation 96.70. The accrediting entity assigned to review and resolve complaints will verify that the complainant has attempted to seek resolution through the Agency's internal procedures prior to consideration.

Adoption ARK will provide access to the information (when it is available in accordance with retention of complaint rules) regarding a complaint if the complainant wishes to take further action to attempt to obtain satisfaction beyond the procedures of Adoption ARK.

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

1. The record of the complaint is filed in the Complaint Records folder.
2. The records are kept for five years.
3. The responsibility of managing the Complaint Records folder is upon employees of the Adoption ARK Headquarter Office in Buffalo Grove, IL.
4. Staff of the Adoption ARK Headquarter Office 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.

### **IV. Analysis of received complaints**

1. Adoption ARK's Executive Director will perform an analysis of clients' satisfaction surveys ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) and an exploratory review of complaints twice a year. All common complaints will be summarized and recommendations on how to deal with similar situations will be sent to all staff members.

2. Adoption ARK will provide a summary of all complaints related regarding any issues of Adoption ARK's compliance with state law, the Hague Convention, the IAA or regulations implementing IAA on a semi-annual basis.

The summary of complaints will include all complaints during the preceding six months and will include:

- The number of complaints;
- The resolution of each complaint;
- An assessment of any discernible pattern in the complaints; and
- The information on how the agency adjusted or will adjust its policies or procedures or initiated other action in response to the pattern.

Adoption ARK clients are encouraged to complete periodic surveys in order to enhance quality assurance.

**V. Submission of records, summaries and other information regarding complaints to governmental authorities**

1. Adoption ARK provides to the accrediting entity and/or other governmental agencies, on a semiannual 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 against the agency.
2. Adoption ARK is obliged to provide to the accrediting entity and/or other governmental agencies information about what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by the agency in response to such patterns.
3. The agency provides any information about complaints received as may be requested by the accrediting entity and/or other governmental authorities.