

Hague Regulation 96.41 (a-h) and the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)

Client Grievance Policy and Procedure (revised October 2023)

Please note: Family Resource Center is the agency's legal name as indicated on the agency license and Hague Accreditation certificate.

Background and purpose

This grievance procedure is designed to provide a process for FRC clients to bring grievances concerning the manner in which they are being served at FRC directly to the attention of FRC's management and to reach a quick resolution. A grievance is defined as any cause of distress or any relevant condition that a client reasonably thinks or feels is unfair, unjust, or inequitable.

In regard to the provision of intercountry adoption services, the Hague Complaint Registry has been established to receive and maintain records of grievances about accredited agencies, temporarily accredited agencies and approved persons, who provide intercountry adoption services in accordance with Federal Regulations, 22 CFR 96.70.

FRC permits any birth parent, prospective adoptive parent, adoptive parent, or adoptee to lodge directly with the agency a signed and dated written complaint about any of the services or activities of FRC (including its use of supervised providers) that he or she believes raise an issue of compliance with the Convention, the IAA, the UAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA or UAA, and advises such individuals of the additional procedures available to them if they are dissatisfied with the agency's or person's response to their complaint (96.41(b)). This grievance procedure also applies to any client concern regarding compliance with DCFS child welfare licensing standards.

FRC has a written complaint policy and procedure that incorporate the standards (96.41) and provides a copy of such policy and procedure, including contact information for the Complaint Registry, to client(s) at the time the adoption services contract is signed or in the case of birth parents, prior to placement 96.41(a), [225 ILCS 10/9.1b].

FRC has a strict policy prohibiting any action that would discourage or retaliate against any client for making or expressing any type of complaint or grievance. 96.41(e)

FRC maintains a written record of each complaint received and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and makes this record available to the accrediting entity and the Secretary upon request. 96.41(d). This record is also made available to Illinois DCFS.

Process and Procedure

As noted, FRC provides a copy of the complaint policy and procedure to clients. A written acknowledgment of the complaint policy is maintained in the client's file.

Any grievance should first be discussed with the client's counselor or home study worker. A client may share their concern directly with a supervisor. The client should be aware, however, that the supervisor would share any concerns with the appropriate counselor or home study worker. Open discussions can often address the concern and resolve the issue satisfactorily. If the client is not satisfied with the outcome after these discussions, they may initiate a formal Grievance Resolution Process. 96.41(b)

The client should describe in a dated written statement the nature of their grievance and submit the grievance to FRC's Executive Director via email: jturner@adoptillinois.org, fax (773) 321-0300 or US mail to Family Resource Center, 5828 N. Clark, Chicago, IL 60660. 96.41(b)

The Executive Director shall initiate an investigation of complaint received within two business days. The Executive Director will share the grievance with the appropriate counselor or home study worker and determine whether correctable action is indicated. The client may be asked to meet with their counselor or

home study worker and the Executive Director. The Executive Director will respond in writing to any complaints within 30 days of receipt. The response will be expedited for any complaints that are time sensitive or that involved allegations of fraud. 96.41(c). Copies of written responses to complaints will be provided to the client and a copy placed in the client file.

As required by Illinois law, FRC will report any grievances received and the outcome of its grievance investigation in writing to the DCFS Licensing Representative within 10 business days after grievances are received unless extenuating circumstances exist which require additional time for resolution. DCFS will also receive a copy of FRC's written response.

If for any reason the client is dissatisfied with the results of the resolution reached by FRC and believes FRC is not in compliance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA), the regulations implementing the IAA, or the UAA (Universal Accreditation Act) families and individuals working with FRC may report grievances they have against FRC to The Hague Complaint Registry (HCR) on the Consular Affairs public website at http://adoption.state.gov/hague_convention/agency_accreditation/complaints.php

(96.41(b)). Complainants may report grievances to DCFS through the Illinois State Central Registry complaint phone number (1-800-252-2873).

Since FRC's Hague Accreditation in February of 2008, FRC has submitted to the accrediting entity and secretary, on a semi-annual basis, a summary of all grievances that may have been received during the preceding six months (including the number of complaints received and how each complaint was resolved). These reports would also include an assessment of any discernible patterns in grievances and if such a pattern were present, what changes FRC made or planned to be made as a result of such grievances. 96.41(f). In addition to the semi-annual reports, FRC provides any additional information about complaints received pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section as may be requested by the accrediting entity or the Secretary. 96.41(g)

The Executive Director is responsible for reporting on the nature of any complaint and the resolution at FRC's next meeting of the Board of Directors.

Family Resource Center has a well-structured PQI quality improvement program and makes systematic efforts to improve its adoption services. This program includes regular meetings, the participation of an FRC board member and keeping records of meetings. FRC uses quality improvement methods including reviewing complaint data and client satisfaction surveys. 96.41(h)