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## **FFAS Grievance and Dispute Resolution Policy**

Forever Families Adoption Services, Inc. (FFAS) anticipates a good working relationship with our clients and other individuals involved in an adoption process, including any birth parent, prospective adoptive parent, adoptive parent or adoptee. In accordance with Hague Standard §96.41:

- 96.41(b) It is our policy that we encourage any birth parent, prospective adoptive parent, adoptive parent or adoptee to lodge directly with the agency a written complaint specifying the date and nature of the complaint, including names of the involved parties. Complaints can be related to any of the services or activities of the agency (including its use of supervised providers) that he or she believes raise an issue of compliance and advises such individuals.
- FFAS will advise the complainant of additional procedures available to them if they are dissatisfied with the agency's response to the complaint.
- 96.41(c) FFAS will respond to complaints received within 30 days of receipt and will provide expedited review of such complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud.
- 96.41 9(d)(f)(g) FFAS will maintain a written record of each complaint received and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and make this record available to the Council on Accreditation and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of State as requested or on a semi-annual basis. This will include number of complaints received, how each complaint was resolved, an assessment of any discernible patterns in complaints received and information on what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by FFAS in response to such patterns of complaints. All documentation will be maintained in the client's file.
- 96.41(e) FFAS will take no action to discourage a complaint or to retaliate against any client or involved entity making a complaint, expressing a grievance, providing information in writing or interviews to an accrediting entity, questioning the conduct of or expressing an opinion about the performance of FFAS and its services, activities or staff.
- As part of FFAS's Program Evaluation and Improvement Measures plan, complaint data will be reviewed annually by the Executive Staff and the Board of Directors.

- The following procedures have been established to ensure that all sides and parties to any complaint receive fair and equal hearing by those responsible for resolving complaints:
  - (a) All involved parties will be provided with a copy of the FFAS Grievance and Dispute Resolution Policy at the time the adoption/service contract is signed. Any questions regarding the policy and procedure should be directed to the Executive Director for further explanation.
  - (b) All involved parties will sign and date the notification form.
  - (c) When a client has a grievance, the client should first discuss the grievance with his or her adoption social worker. If an agreement is not reached through this discussion the client should proceed to the next step of this grievance procedure.
  - (d) The birth parent, prospective adoptive parent or adoptive parent must submit a complaint in writing to the Executive Director. Mail grievances to Forever Families Adoption Services, Inc., P.O. Box 2085, Middleburg, Virginia 20118.
  - (e) Once notified in writing, FFAS will initiate an investigation of the complaint within 5 business days.
  - (f) The Executive Director will reply to the client's written grievance in writing within 10 business days.
  - (g) The Executive Director will respond to complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud as soon as they are received.
  - (h) If more time is needed to resolve the complaint, the Executive Director will inform the client and make every effort to provide a written resolution to the grievance and report the actions that were taken to resolve such grievance within 30 working days.
  - (i) The Executive Director will attempt to resolve the conflict within 5 working days of its receipt. The Executive Director must issue a written decision and provide a copy of same to the aggrieved client.
  - (j) The Executive Director will summarize in writing the agency's issues, the client's and the outcome. This summary will be filed in the client's confidential information file and a copy will be provided to the complainant.
  - (k) If the decision of the Executive Director does not resolve the conflict, or if the conflict is with the Executive Director the aggrieved client may present his/her complaint back to the Executive Director who will inform the Board of Directors in writing of the grievance. The Board of Directors will conduct a review of the matter, take action to

make a final determination and then respond to the client in writing within 10 business days.

- (l) If for any reason the client is dissatisfied with the results of the resolution reached by FFAS and believes that FFAS is not in compliance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, the IAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA, families and individuals working with FFAS may report complaints they have against FFAS to The Hague Complaint Registry (HCR) on the Consular Affairs public website at:

[http://adoption.state.gov/hague\\_convention/agency\\_accreditation/complaints.php](http://adoption.state.gov/hague_convention/agency_accreditation/complaints.php)

The Hague Complaint Registry was established to receive and maintain records of complaints about accredited agencies, temporarily accredited agencies and approved persons, who provide adoption services in connection with adoption cases covered by the Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention in accordance with Federal Regulations, 22 CFR 96.70.

- (m) If the complaint does not involve The Hague Convention, the IAA, or the Federal regulations implementing the IAA and the Convention, the Department of State would still like to hear about it. Please email them at AskCI@state.gov. In addition, you may contact the Virginia Department of Social Services at 804.662.7053.

**WE HAVE READ, FULLY UNDERSTAND AND WILL COMPLY WITH ALL ELEMENTS OF FFAS' GRIEVANCE AND **DISPUTE** RESOLUTION POLICY.**

**Applicant 1** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name Printed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Applicant 2** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name Printed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**FFAS Rep. Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**