

Convention countries when the financial institutions of the Convention country so permit and for obtaining written receipts for such transfers, so that direct cash transactions by the prospective adoptive parent(s) to pay for adoption services provided in the Convention country are minimized or unnecessary.

(g) The agency or person does not customarily charge additional fees and expenses beyond those disclosed in the adoption services contract and has a written policy to this effect. In the event that unforeseen additional fees and expenses are incurred in the Convention country, the agency or person charges such additional fees and expenses only under the following conditions:

(1) It discloses the fees and expenses in writing to the prospective adoptive parent(s);

(2) It obtains the specific consent of the prospective adoptive parent(s) prior to expending any funds in excess of \$1000 for which the agency or person will hold the prospective adoptive parent(s) responsible or gives the prospective adoptive parent(s) the opportunity to waive the notice and consent requirement in advance. If the prospective adoptive parent(s) has the opportunity to waive the notice and consent requirement in advance, this policy is reflected in the written policies and procedures of the agency or person; and

(3) It provides written receipts to the prospective adoptive parent(s) for fees and expenses paid directly by the agency or person in the Convention country and retains copies of such receipts.

(h) The agency or person returns any funds to which the prospective adoptive parent(s) may be entitled within sixty days of the completion of the delivery of services.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND  
RECORDS AND REPORTS MANAGEMENT

**§96.41 Procedures for responding to complaints and improving service delivery.**

(a) The agency or person has written complaint policies and procedures that incorporate the standards in paragraphs (b) through (h) of this section and provides a copy of such policies and procedures, including contact in-

formation for the Complaint Registry, to client(s) at the time the adoption services contract is signed.

(b) The agency or person permits 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 Convention, the IAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA, 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.

(c) The agency or person responds in writing to complaints received pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section within thirty days of receipt, and provides expedited review of such complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud.

(d) The agency or person maintains a written record of each complaint received pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and makes this record available to the accrediting entity or the Secretary upon request.

(e) The agency or person does 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 an agency or person.

(f) The agency or person provides to the accrediting entity and the Secretary, on a semi-annual basis, a summary of all complaints received pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section 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 or person pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section, along with information about what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by the agency or person in response to such patterns.

(g) The agency or person provides any information about complaints received pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section as may be requested by the accrediting entity or the Secretary.

(h) The agency or person has a quality improvement program appropriate to its size and circumstances through which it makes systematic efforts to improve its adoption services as needed. The agency or person uses quality improvement methods such as reviewing complaint data, using client satisfaction surveys, or comparing the agency's or person's practices and performance against the data contained in the Secretary's annual reports to Congress on intercountry adoptions.

**§ 96.42 Retention, preservation, and disclosure of adoption records.**

(a) The agency or person retains or archives adoption records in a safe, secure, and retrievable manner for the period of time required by applicable State law.

(b) The agency or person makes readily available to the adoptee and the adoptive parent(s) upon request all non-identifying information in its custody about the adoptee's health history or background.

(c) The agency or person 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.

(d) The agency or person has a plan that is consistent with the provisions of this section, the plan required under § 96.33, and applicable State law for transferring custody of adoption records that are subject to retention or archival requirements to an appropriate custodian, and ensuring the accessibility of those adoption records, in the event that the agency or person ceases to provide or is no longer permitted to provide adoption services under the Convention.

(e) The agency or person notifies the accrediting entity and the Secretary in writing within thirty days of the time it ceases to provide or is no longer permitted to provide adoption services and provides information about the transfer of its adoption records.

**§ 96.43 Case tracking, data management, and reporting.**

(a) When acting as the primary provider, the agency or person maintains all the data required in this section in a format approved by the accrediting entity and provides it to the accrediting entity on an annual basis.

(b) When acting as the primary provider, the agency or person routinely generates and maintains reports as follows:

(1) For cases involving children immigrating to the United States, information and reports on the total number of intercountry adoptions undertaken by the agency or person each year in both Convention and non-Convention cases and, for each case:

(i) The Convention country or other country from which the child emigrated;

(ii) The State to which the child immigrated;

(iii) The State, Convention country, or other country in which the adoption was finalized;

(iv) The age of the child; and

(v) The date of the child's placement for adoption.

(2) For cases involving children emigrating from the United States, information and reports on the total number of intercountry adoptions undertaken by the agency or person each year in both Convention and non-Convention cases and, for each case:

(i) The State from which the child emigrated;

(ii) The Convention country or other country to which the child immigrated;

(iii) The State, Convention country, or other country in which the adoption was finalized;

(iv) The age of the child; and

(v) The date of the child's placement for adoption.

(3) For each disrupted placement involving a Convention adoption, information and reports about the disruption, including information on:

(i) The Convention country from which the child emigrated;

(ii) The State to which the child immigrated;

(iii) The age of the child;

(iv) The date of the child's placement for adoption;