

(c) Forms and information necessary to submit complaints to the Complaint Registry electronically or by such other means as the Secretary may determine will be accessible through the Department's website to persons who wish to file complaints. Such forms will be designed to ensure that each complaint complies with the requirements of § 96.69.

(d) Accrediting entities will have access to, and the capacity to enter data into, the Complaint Registry as the Secretary deems appropriate.

(e) Nothing in this part shall be construed to limit the Secretary's authority to take such action as the Secretary deems appropriate with respect to complaints.

§ 96.71 Review by the accrediting entity of complaints against accredited agencies and approved persons.

(a) The accrediting entity must establish written procedures, including deadlines, for recording, investigating, and acting upon complaints it receives pursuant to §§ 96.69 and 96.70(b)(1). The procedures must be consistent with this section and be approved by the Secretary. The accrediting entity must make written information about its complaint procedures available upon request.

(b) If the accrediting entity determines that a complaint implicates the Convention, the IAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA:

(1) The accrediting entity must verify that the complainant has already attempted to resolve the complaint as described in § 96.69(b) and, if not, may refer the complaint to the agency or person, or to the primary provider, for attempted resolution through its internal complaint procedures;

(2) The accrediting entity may conduct whatever investigative activity (including site visits) it considers necessary to determine whether any relevant accredited agency or approved person may maintain accreditation or approval as provided in § 96.27. The provisions of §§ 96.25 and 96.26 govern requests for and use of information. The accrediting entity must give priority to complaints submitted pursuant to § 96.69(d);

(3) If the accrediting entity determines that the agency or person may not maintain accreditation or approval, it must take adverse action pursuant to subpart K of this part.

(c) When the accrediting entity has completed its complaint review process, it must provide written notification of the outcome of its investigation, and any actions taken, to the complainant, or to any other entity that referred the information.

(d) The accrediting entity will enter information about the outcomes of its investigations and its actions on complaints into the Complaint Registry as provided in its agreement with the Secretary.

(e) The accrediting entity may not take any action to discourage an individual from, or retaliate against an individual for, making a complaint, expressing a grievance, questioning the conduct of, or expressing an opinion about the performance of an accredited agency, an approved person, or the accrediting entity.

§ 96.72 Referral of complaints to the Secretary and other authorities.

(a) An accrediting entity must report promptly to the Secretary any substantiated complaint that:

(1) Reveals that an accredited agency or approved person has engaged in a pattern of serious, willful, grossly negligent, or repeated failures to comply with the standards in subpart F of this part; or

(2) Indicates that continued accreditation or approval would not be in the best interests of the children and families concerned.

(b) An accrediting entity must, after consultation with the Secretary, refer, as appropriate, to a State licensing authority, the Attorney General, or other law enforcement authorities any substantiated complaints that involve conduct that is:

(1) Subject to the civil or criminal penalties imposed by section 404 of the IAA (42 U.S.C. 14944);

(2) In violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 *et seq.*); or

(3) Otherwise in violation of Federal, State, or local law.