

## **Complaint Policy and Procedures**

Creating a family through adoption can be a complicated and challenging experience. It is also a process that can be costly and often subject to delays outside the control of Spence-Chapin or our clients. We understand how difficult this process is and we do our utmost to prepare and support our clients at all stages of the adoption process. Our greatest responsibility, however, is to protect the best interest of children.

In doing so, sometimes Spence-Chapin must make decisions with which our clients do not agree. Although it is not always possible for staff to accommodate or concur with the wishes of clients, all clients are entitled to clear explanations of the policies and procedures used by the agency as well as specific decisions made within the programs. We are committed to providing you with a supportive environment where questions, complaints, and concerns can be aired and problems resolved whenever possible.

Any client with questions, concerns, or complaints related to any Spence-Chapin program should bring those concerns directly to the staff member with whom you are working. If doing so does not resolve the issue, or if you feel uncomfortable with that approach, you should contact that staff member's supervisor or the appropriate department director in writing. Once notified in writing, Spence-Chapin, will initiate an investigation of the complaint within two business days and the appropriate department director will reply to the Adoptive Parent's grievance in writing within 10 business days. If you find that your concerns are not resolved through this process, you should send a letter to the President/Chief Executive Officer of Spence-Chapin. We will either respond directly or recommend a resolution within (30) thirty days (or sooner if the issue is time-sensitive or involves allegation of fraud.)

If for any reason the client is dissatisfied with the results of the resolution reached by Spence-Chapin and believes that Spence-Chapin is not in compliance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, the IAA, or the regulations implementing such, families and individuals working with Spence-Chapin may report complaint they have against Spence-Chapin to the Hague Complaint Registry (HCR), which 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. on the following website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/hague-convention/agency-accreditation/hague-complaint-registry.html>

In addition, because Spence-Chapin is licensed to provide adoption services by the states of New York and New Jersey, general complaints about Spence-Chapin's operating procedures and policies can be submitted to state agencies following the protocol listed below. Complaints about issues related to specific cases are usually resolved through fair hearings administered at the state level (details can also be found below).

To make a confidential complaint about the operations of an agency providing domestic or international adoption for NEW YORK residents, address complaints to The Office of Children and Family Services, the state agency which licenses Spence-Chapin:

**Office of Children and Family Services**  
**52 Washington Street**  
**Rensselaer, NY 12144**  
**518-474-9406**

A specific complaint about how a New York domestic or international adoption case is being handled can be addressed by requesting a Fair Hearing with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services:

**Special Hearings Bureau**  
**New York State Office of Children and Family Services**  
**1 Commerce Plaza**  
**Albany, NY 12260**

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To make a confidential complaint about the operations of an agency providing domestic or international adoption for NEW JERSEY residents, contact:

**State of New Jersey  
Department of Children and Families  
Office of Licensing  
P.O. Box 717  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-826-3999**

Complaints can be made by phone or in writing and sent to the address above. Cases that cannot be immediately resolved will be investigated.

New Jersey residents may also contact the not-for-profit Foster and Adoptive Family Services agency at 800-222-0047. This organization advocates for the rights of clients in the adoption and foster care systems.