



## Foster and Adoptive Parents and Applicants: How to solve a problem with Children's Services

As a foster or adoptive parent or an applicant, you may not always agree with the decisions or actions taken by the agency. If you disagree with a decision or action, we encourage you to try and settle the issue with the worker first. However, when that does not resolve the problem, you may ask for a review through the agency's 3-step Problem Resolution and Grievance Procedure, which is described below.

- If your concern is related to the foster or pre-adoptive child, contact the child's worker.
- If your concern is related to your foster or pre-adoptive home or family, contact your support worker, adoption worker, or homestudy assessment worker.

Share your concerns and ask the worker to explain why the decision or action was taken. Listen to the worker's answers. If you and the worker cannot solve the problem, follow the steps listed below.

**NOTE:** Certain very serious complaints as described within this Fact Sheet can be addressed through a formal hearing with the Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board. You are encouraged *but not required* to resolve serious complaints at the supervisor and section manager levels before requesting a hearing with the Grievance Board.

### Step 1: Talk with the Supervisor

- Call 946-1000 and ask for the name and telephone number of the worker's supervisor.
- Contact the worker's supervisor. You can talk with the supervisor over the phone or ask for a meeting.
- Describe your concerns and tell the supervisor why you're not satisfied.

- Listen and ask questions.
  - The supervisor will listen and work with you to solve the problem.
  - You will receive a letter from the supervisor. The letter will explain your concerns and what actions the supervisor will or will not take.
  - If you are not satisfied with the supervisor's response, take step 2.

### Step 2: Talk with the Section Chief

- Call 946-1000 and ask for the name and telephone number of the supervisor's section chief.
- Contact the section chief. The section manager will either talk with you on the phone or schedule a meeting.
- The section chief will listen to your concerns and work to solve the problem.
- The section chief will send you a letter. The letter will list your concerns and what actions the section manager will or will not take.
- If you are not satisfied with the section chief's response, take step 3.

### Stay of Action:

The agency will stay any planned action related to your complaint pending the outcome of the Director's meeting or grievance hearing, unless the responsible section manager documents that such a stay would be clearly detrimental to the child or clearly not in the child's best interest.

### **Step 3: Meet with the Director or Director's Representative**

- Call 946-1000 and ask for the Director's Office. In an effort to serve you quickly, the Director may appoint a representative.\*
- The Director/Representative will schedule a meeting.
- You and either the section manager or supervisor will be asked to attend. You'll be asked to explain your concerns.
- The supervisor/section manager will explain the decisions or actions taken on the case and why they were taken.
- The Director/Representative will listen to everyone's concerns and work to solve the problem.
- The Director/Representative will send you a letter. The letter will explain your concerns and the actions the agency will or will not take. The decision of the Director/Representative is **final**.

\*If the problem you have with Children's Services is listed below as a serious complaint, the Director's representative will be the Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board.

#### **Grievance Board for Serious Complaints:**

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board acts as the Director's representative if your complaint is one of the following:

- You have been denied approval as a foster or adoptive parent
- The agency will not use your foster or adoptive home
- A foster or pre-adoptive child is being removed from your home
- The agency is recommending that your foster parent license be revoked or your recertification be denied
- \*\*You believe you have been denied a foster or adoptive placement or approval as a foster or adoptive parent based on the race, color or national origin of yourself or the child (alleged MEPA violation)

\*\* Applicants and adoptive parents may also file a formal complaint alleging MEPA discrimination with the Bureau of Civil Rights of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This formal complaint may be filed in addition to or in place of requesting a hearing with the agency's Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board. However, if you initiate both procedures, the agency's internal Problem Resolution and Grievance Procedure may be suspended or delayed until the completion of the ODJFS investigation of your formal MEPA complaint. See the MEPA Formal Complaint Procedure for information on filing a formal MEPA complaint or call the HCJFS MEPA Monitor, Shirley Norman, 946-1488, for more information.

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board serves as the Director's representative **ONLY** on the issues noted above. If you want to schedule a hearing with the Foster and Adoptive Parent Grievance Board, call the Children's Services Consumer Services Office at 946-2138. If your problem is related to any other issue, contact the Director's Office.

#### **Formal Problem Resolution and Grievance Procedure:**

For a copy of the formal Foster and Adoptive Parent Problem Resolution and Grievance Procedure, call the Children's Services Consumer Services Office at 946-2138. This procedure can also be found in the *Foster Parent and Adoption Handbook*.