



Lorain County Children Services

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Adoption and Foster Care Policy (per ODJFS 5101:2-48-05)

Lorain County Children Services is committed to securing permanent Adoptive homes for children with special needs who cannot return to their birth families. Services include recruiting, screening, developing and assessing, and matching potential families in order to select the most appropriate families who can meet the life long needs of the child. In addition, the agency will ensure that all qualified members of this community will have an opportunity to adopt.

Foster/adoptive home studies and pre-service training will be available for Lorain County residents who express an interest in adopting a child with special needs. Lorain County Children Services will provide adoptive home studies and pre-service training to non-Lorain County residents who wish to adopt a child in our custody with special needs when the applicants' home agency is unable to initiate an adoptive home study within a reasonable amount of time.

Children who have special needs may possess one or more of the following characteristics:

- a) The child is 6 and older
- b) The child is in a sibling group of three or more or is being adopted as part of a previously adopted biological sibling group of three or more that makes it difficult to place the child for adoption without the provision of AA.
- c) The child is a member of a minority racial or ethnic group that makes it difficult to place the child for adoption without the provision of AA.
- d) The child has remained in the permanent custody of a PCSA or PCPA for more than one year without being placed in an approved adoptive home.
- e) The child has been in the home of his/her prospective adoptive parent(s) as a foster child for at least six consecutive months directly preceding the adoptive placement and would experience severe separation and loss if placed in another setting due to his/her significant emotional ties with the foster parent(s) as determined and documented by a qualified mental health professional.
- f) The child has experienced a previous adoption disruption or three or more disrupted substitute care placements while in the custody of a PCSA or PCPA.
- g) The child or the child's biological family has a social or medical history that established a substantial risk for a developmental disability or delay, mental illness, or mental retardation, which would make it difficult to place the child for adoption without the provision of AA.

Families who contact the Agency to inquire about foster care/adoption will be responded to immediately, or within seven days. Their inquiry will be logged into our database and a packet of information with the following information will be sent to them within seven days:

- A copy of the JFS 01675 Ohio Adoption Guide
- A description of Title IV-E adoption assistance and state adoption subsidy programs including eligibility requirements and the application process
- How to get an application for adoption
- A copy of the PCSA, PCPA or PNA adoption policy, or summary of the policy
- The criminal records check requirement
- The foster care/adoption homestudy assessment process
- Information regarding the state adoption assistance loan program (when information is available thru ODJFS)

The information contained in this letter is confidential information intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or the employee or the agent responsible to deliver it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this letter is strictly prohibited. https://ohiodas-my.sharepoint.com/personal/50182167@ohio.gov/Documents/Julie%20Julie's%20One%20Drive/lanepolicies/Adopt_Foster_Care_Policy
If you have received this letter in error, please immediately notify us by telephone at (440) 329-5340 or return this letter via regular mail. Thank you. Lorain County Children Services.



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- The procedure for any complaints of discrimination in the foster care or adoption process that involve race, color or national origin.

1. **Geographical Location:** Homestudies will be conducted for individuals residing in Lorain County or within a 45 minute drive from the agency. All other inquiries will be referred to the closest agency. Requests from other states or counties from within Ohio will be handled on a case-by-case decision. All requests for a homestudy must involve a child with special needs.
2. **Matching:** Lorain County Children Services pro-actively works to match all appropriate approved families with waiting child(ren) who are in the permanent custody of Lorain County Children Services for possible matches with children. This requires several steps and assessments including but not limited to: the needs of the child(ren), and a home visit to the prospective adoptive family by both workers to assess the family's ability to meet the special needs of the child they are interested in. In addition to the above, Lorain County Children Services will give consideration to keeping siblings placed together, even if placed separately in foster care. Siblings will be kept together whenever possible unless a compelling reason exists to separating the siblings. The Agency will also include the child in some of the decision-making and selection of a family, age permitting. When selecting an adoptive home, Lorain County Children Services, regardless of geographical location, will consider any relative or foster caregiver who has expressed interest in the child, for consideration at the matching conference. The following is the preferential order for the placement of a child if more than one family is being considered for matching:
 - An adult relative.
 - The foster caregiver with whom the child resides, if the child has substantial emotional ties to the foster caregiver and if the removal of the child from placement with the foster caregiver would be detrimental to the child's well-being.
 - A foster caregiver with whom the child has previously resided at any time.
 - An approved adoptive parent(s) who is accepting of the child's characteristics and who has expressed an interest in adopting the child.
 - If only one relative or if only the child's current foster caregiver has expressed an interest, and if deemed to be in the child's best interest, the Agency shall give preference to this family in the matching selection, the Agency is not required to consider other families in the matching process.

For a child who does not have an identified family, a matching meeting will be held at least every 90 days until a permanent family is located. If there are no families available to be considered at a matching conference, the Agency shall conduct a child specific recruitment for the child prior to the next matching conference. This plan will include at a minimum:

- Distributing written recruitment information on the child to adoption agencies
- Review of the case record for relatives or individuals in the child's past who may be able and willing to provide permanency.
- Exploring with the child individuals they may know who would be interested in considering adoption.

The decision to place a child into a specific adoptive family shall be made by at least three staff members. In each case, the agency shall consider the child's individual needs and the ability of the prospective adoptive parents to meet those needs.

The Agency will consider families that have their homestudies approved and submitted by a public or private agency for consideration and possible selection when the Agency is recruiting for a child. For any child we are recruiting for, the Agency will have to establish a cut-off date for acceptance of homestudies in order to effectively select and match the most appropriate family with the child. If the Agency receives more than five families who are potential matches for the child, they may narrow the number of families to five, based on the level of experience the family has in working with children with specific behaviors, medical conditions, mental health challenges, and/or the preference to keep

siblings together, if in the child's best interest. If a former family was interested and was previously considered and not selected, the Agency does not have to consider for subsequent matchings. The Agency will utilize the ODJFS Placement Decision Making Form for each matching conference.

If the child is a member of a federally recognized tribe or Alaskan Native Village, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901 (1/2/06)(ICWA) shall take precedence for an adoption.

3. **Sharing Homestudies**

Lorain County Children Services will be able to share homestudies with other public/private agencies upon receipt of a release of information from the applicant. Should Lorain County Children Services receive homestudies for any child waiting for adoption, the agency will only accept the homestudy from an agency, not from the individual family. Once we have received the homestudy, the agency will file the homestudy and will keep the homestudy on file for up to two years, unless we are notified that the family has adopted, or has requested us to remove the homestudy.

4. **Large Family Assessment:** Should a family who has submitted an application to adopt or is already approved to adopt and would have five (5) or more children within their family system, an assessor will conduct a Multiple Children/Large Family Assessment JFS 01530 form prior to the matching process in order to be considered for a particular child/children. If the family is from another county or private agency, the agencies involved will decide who will complete the process and the time frames for achieving such requirement.

5. **Open Adoption:** Lorain County Children Services believes that openness in adoption is viewed for some children and families as a continuum in the adoption process. Children currently in the custody of the agency may be considered for open adoption; however, the agency will comply with ORC Sect. 3107.62,64,65 when addressing requests for open adoption and can not consider it for families who contest the motion for PC. When considering a request for open adoption, the agency will consider many factors such as the benefit and appropriateness to all those involved, the type, length and duration or frequency of contact, the birth parents' support of the guidelines and understanding of potential problems, and ways to address them and any safety issues which may arise. All requests for open adoption must be made in accordance to the law and are not binding.

6. **Training Requirements:** Lorain County Children Services requires all prospective foster/adoptive parents to attend 36 hours of Pre-service training. Relative/kinship care providers are encouraged to attend all training sessions. Exceptions to this guideline are made on an administrative level. Contents of the Pre-service training which is offered to those interested in fostering or adopting consists of the following:

- Orientation and Overview of Foster Care/Adoption/Kinship Care
 - ◆ The Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Foster Caregivers – Adoption Process and Criteria for Adoptive Families/Approving Adoptive Families
 - ◆ ODJFS Requirements/Agency Criteria for Certifying Foster Homes/Approving Adoptive Families
- Teambuilding
 - ◆ Notification to Foster Parents Re: A Child Who Has Been Adjudicated Delinquent
 - ◆ Independent Living Program – “Foster Care Independence Act of 1999”
 - ◆ Foster Parents' Involvement in Permanency Planning for Children and Families
- De-escalation Techniques
- Working With Primary Families
- Family Systems and Abuse and Neglect

- Effects of Abuse, Neglect, and Substance Abuse on Normal Child Development (Includes Sexual & Emotional Abuse)
- Attachment, Separation and Placement Issues and Effects on Children: Their Families and Foster/Adoptive Caregivers
- Discipline and Behavioral Management Techniques
- Cultural Diversity Issues in Placement
- Sexual Abuse
 - ♦ Prevention, Recognition and Management of Communicable Disease
 - ♦ Community Health and Social Services Available to Children and Their Families
- Effects of Caregiving on the Foster/Adoptive and Biological Family.
 - ♦ Policies and Procedures Regarding Foster Caregivers / Adoptive Families Take After License/Approved
- De-Escalation Techniques
- CPR and First Aid

An additional four (4) hours of training is required prior to adopting. These classes will explore the Permanency Issues and Involvement for Children and Families.

7. **Criminal Record Check:** All prospective adoptive parents and any adult(s) living in the household are required to have a fingerprint evaluation through the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCII) and/or through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Adults who have lived outside of the State of Ohio as an adult will be required to obtain an FBI fingerprint evaluation. The cost of the fingerprint checks and background checks will be covered by the agency, and done at the agency during training or as scheduled. Local criminal records check must also be conducted and satisfactorily completed. Rules governing the licensing of adoptive homes prohibit individuals convicted of crimes against children, sex offenses, some drug offenses and felonies from being approved. Additional specific criminal offenses as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code 2901.01 - 2927.02 and 3716.11 would prevent an applicant from being approved. Prospective foster/adoptive applicants must also have a good driving record to proceed with the process. Those applicants with criminal involvement will not be eligible to become foster/adoptive parents with LCCS, unless approved by the Director.

* Criminal records checks conducted by BCII are not public records.

8. **Restrictions Regarding Length of Time between Adoptions.** So that each child may have the opportunity to become well integrated into their new family, the agency will not accept a subsequent application to adopt for at least one year after an adoption placement. All exceptions need administrative approval.

9. **Home Studies:** Eligibility Requirement:

- A. **Age:** All foster parent or foster to adoptive applicants must be at least 21 years of age. Adoptive parent applicants must be at least 18 years of age or older.
- B. **Marital status:** Applicants may be single or married. Married applicants shall have been married at least one year. Individuals who are co-habiting are not considered married. Applicants who are divorced or legally separated must be so for at least one year.
- C. **Finances:** Adoptive applicants must demonstrate their ability to meet the basic needs of the present family system. Adoption subsidies may be available to assist with expenses for the adopted child.
- D. **Housing:** The adoptive applicant(s) must reside in safe and sanitary housing with sufficient space to accommodate an adopted child.
- E. **Lorain County Children Services history or other child welfare agency history:** A foster/adoptive family applicant who has had a history with an agency due to abuse, neglect or dependency of a child may not be eligible.
- F. Families who are interested in adopting non-special needs infant, age 0-2 or older non-special needs children will be referred to local private adoption agencies.

- G. Applicants who are interested in adopting will also be required to apply for a foster care license concurrently. Lorain County Children Services will utilize the joint assessment process and simultaneously certify an applicant for foster care licensure and adoption approval.
 - H. At least one parent must be able to speak, read, and write in English.
 - I. **Central Registry Check:** All foster-to-adopt families and any adult household members must have a child abuse clearance conducted within Ohio via SACWIS or Central Registry and any state they resided in previously prior to approval or placement of a child.
 - J. TB testing (provided through the agency) is also required.
 - K. In order to maintain a drug free healthy, safe and secure environment, random drug testing for all adults and children 14 and older prior to licensing or approving a homestudy will be required. If a positive drug screen is present during the pre-licensing process, Lorain County Children Services will maintain the right to determine whether or not the licensing process can continue. Drug testing is paid for by the agency.
 - L. The completed homestudy will be released to other agencies only with a release of information form signed. Foster/adoptive families will be allowed to read their individual homestudies upon request.
10. **Collaborating with Network Adoption Providers and other PCSAs, PCPAs, and PNAs:** The Agency will work cooperatively with licensed and/or legally credentialed adoption agencies within Ohio or outside of the state. The Agency must verify an agency's credentials and will keep the documentation on record. Agencies from outside of the State of Ohio must meet the same elements required by Ohio or be willing to obtain the additional elements if wanting to be considered for a child. If the family is licensed with another PCSA, PCPA or PNA, the worker will request a copy of the homestudy and related documents and consider all homestudies which meet the needs of the child. Approved homestudies will be kept in alphabetical order in the FBC Department and maintained until the family is no longer available for adoption, a child has been matched with the family, or the homestudy has expired. The Agency will make homestudies accessible within 15 days of receipt of the release of information and will not charge a fee for processing the release of the homestudy. The Agency will document the date information was sent in the Agency's database to be in compliance within the time frame.

Application process

Applications to foster/adopt are obtained during pre-service training requirements from the Family Based Care trainers, or upon request. All applicants must fulfill the preservice training requirements as outlined in Section 5. The agency shall utilize the ODJFS 01673 (Assessment for Child Placement) for all adoption placement requests. Families who request an application prior to pre-session classes, will be sent an application within 7 working days of the request. Families who want to file a formal grievance after attempts to resolve a conflict unsatisfactorily are given an opportunity to use the Agency grievance procedure. This procedure meets the requirements outlined in ODJFS rule 5101:2-48-24.

Notification Issues

Criminal Issues: Adoptive applicants or approved families need to notify the agency in writing if a person residing in the home that is 12 years old or older, but under the age of 18, has been convicted of or plead guilty to specific offenses identified in ODJFS rules.

Adoption/Foster Family Assessment process

All children in the Permanent Custody of Lorain County Children Services will be placed only with relative or adoptive families who have an approved home study. All home studies are conducted by a trained assessor. All adoption applicants shall complete at least 36 hours of pre-service training. Applicants will be assigned an assessor once an application has been received. The assigned assessor will initiate contact with the applicant within three (3) days of assignment and a home visit at least within ten (10) days of assignment. However, all homestudies shall begin within 30 days of receipt of the application. If

there is cause to deny an applicant continuation of the home study process, the agency will notify the applicant in writing within fourteen (14) days of the agency's decision to discontinue the home study process. A joint foster care/adoption application and homestudy will be utilized to approve foster care and adoptive families. Homestudies are usually completed within 90 days, but no longer than 180 days without documentation as to the reason for the delay.

The assessment and foster/adoptive home study shall be a joint decision making process between the applicant and Lorain County Children Services. The home study process shall consist of, but not be limited to, the following:

- A. Documentation obtained pursuant to the application process (5101:2-48-09)
- B. Age of the applicant shall not be a factor when determining an applicants stability for adoption, if the applicant is at least 21 years of age or older.
- C. Review of the completed ODJFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicants" on all household members.
- D. Review of personal references (an assessment concerning personal characteristics) to determine an applicants suitability to parent an adopted child.
- E. Face to face interviews with adoptive applicants and each member of the household including children as appropriate to their age and understanding. At least one interview shall take place in the home of the applicant.
- F. Families who are interested in infants or non-special needs children will be referred to private agencies.
- G. An assessment of the home to ensure that the home meets the health and safety standards that are consistent with rule 5101:2-7-12, paragraph (A), (B), (D), (E), (F), (G), (J), (M), and (N).
- H. Applicants may be required to participate in a mental health screening and/or assessment should the assessor request one. In addition, if deemed necessary the applicant may need to participate in a medical assessment or drug/alcohol assessment.

The assessor shall initiate a homestudy no later than 30 days from the receipt and complete a written home study report in making a decision to approve or deny the adoptive home study, usually within 90 days, but no longer than 180 days. The assessor will provide written notification to the applicant of the approval or denial of their homestudy. If approved, they will also be informed of the date needed for the update or expiration of the homestudy.

Any adoptive applicant's homestudy not completed within one year of the notification to initiate the home study shall be terminated. The assessor shall notify the adoptive applicant in writing no less than 30 days prior to the termination. The written notification shall include a description of the reason for termination.

The agency shall update or amend the foster/adoptive home study when appropriate and according to the rule. All adoptive approvals shall be updated every two years, similar to the foster care recertification process.

The assessor shall notify the family in writing not less than 90 days or more than 120 calendar days prior of the date of expiration of their home study and complete a home study prior to the date of expiration.

Updating or amending the original adoptive home study reports shall consist of, but not be limited to:

- 1. Face to face interviews with the applicant(s) and all household members; at least one interview shall be in the home.
- 2. Assessment of any family changes since the original approval which would affect the applicants ability to successfully parent an adopted child;

3. Assessment of the adjustment of the previously adopted child(ren) and exploration with the adoptive family of the impact of an additional child on the family system.
4. Collect supportive documentation which shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Medical summary of the applicant and household members; and
 - b. A financial summary;
 - c. Police/criminal record check/BCII
 - d. Four (4) personal reference statements
5. Prepare a narrative report which addresses all information obtained during interviews and reviews of documentation provided by the applicant. Updates and amendments will be completed in SACWIS.

The assessor shall notify the adoptive applicant regarding the decision to continue to approve the updated adoptive home study in writing within 30 days of completion.

A written notification shall be given to the applicant about the decision to deny the updated homestudy within 60 days of the completed update. Notifications shall contain the reason for the suspension or termination, and a description of procedure for review pursuant to Rule 5101:2-33-04 or 5101:2-48-11 of the Administrative Code.

In addition to those rules listed above, Lorain County Children Services will comply with the following Rules: 5101:2-48-09(E)(4), 5101:2-48-09(H), 5101:2-48-07, 5101:2-48-19(A), 5101:2-48-19(B), 5101:2-48-19(D), 5101:2-48-24, 5101:2-48-24(D)

Lorain County Children Services recruitment articles and materials and adoption/foster care activities shall be maintained in compliance with the "Indian Child Welfare Act" of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901, et seq, the Adoption & Safe Families act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89, The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq, as they apply to the adoption/foster care process, do not supersede the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

Lorain County Children Services will respond to a request to verify information regarding the custody status of an adult who consents to be adopted was in the agency's custody on the date of their eighteenth birthday within seven (7) days of receiving documentation. The Agency must have verification of the person requesting such information via a driver's license, birth certificate, or other acceptable documentation for verification before any information is released. The Agency will also obtain a release of information to be kept in the record.

Falsification

Should the Agency find reason to believe the information presented in an application or homestudy to be false, the Agency will follow the requirements of Rule 5101:2-33-13. This pertains to anyone applying or another household member who resides in the home. If the situation involves a child in an adoptive family or involves other household members in the family, the agency will reassess the family and report the findings of the internal review according to 5101:2-33-13. The applicant will be notified in writing, regarding their right to an agency review. The Agency will be unable to release any homestudy when it has been determined that the homestudy or application contains a false statement.

Notification

Lorain County Children Services will notify in writing the public children services agency in the county in which the prospective adoptive parent resides in within ten (10) days after the initiation of a homestudy.

The Agency will also send written notification to the public children services agency in another county where the prospective adoptive family resides when an impending adoptive placement is to occur, no later than ten (10) days prior to the placement of the child.

Adoption Subsidy Available

The purpose of Subsidy Programs is to assist Adoptive families financially in order to make permanent homes possible for children with special needs who are in the Permanent Custody of public children services or private child placing agencies. The child must be determined to be a "special needs child" to qualify for these programs. Adoption Assistance subsidy amounts and types will vary from child to child. Regardless of the program, all applications are available through the agency. The Ohio Adoption Subsidy Guide is available upon request through the Agency and/or provided during training, and is provided to all individuals inquiring about adoption.

Federal Adoption Subsidy Programs

- **Federal Title IV-E Adoption Assistance:** Children who are deemed eligible are eligible for a monthly subsidy to assist their adoptive parents in caring for their special needs. The subsidy is negotiated between the agency and adoptive family. If the family is not involved with Lorain County Children Services, the agency involved with the family can apply for the subsidy to determine if the child is eligible.
- **Reimbursement of Non-Recurring Expenses:** This program is available to assist adoptive families who are adopting a special needs child(ren) with certain expenses, such as legal expenses, travel, lodging, food, supervision of the placement, adoption study, psychological exams, and reasonable and necessary adoption fees. This is a one time reimbursement for each child up to the limit specified by ODJFS. All applications must be submitted and approved prior to the finalization. Once approved, families must submit all receipts within two years of the finalization in order to be reimbursed. Families who adopt internationally will not qualify for this subsidy.

State Maintenance Subsidy

This subsidy is available for those children who do not qualify for the Federal Title IV-E Adoption Assistance program. The subsidy is to assist in the support of the adoptive child after finalization; however, this program is based on the adoptive parent's income. The subsidy available is limited to the amount specified by ODJFS on a monthly basis. Applications are available through the Agency and must be applied for prior to finalization.

If an Ohio private child placing agency (PCPA) holds permanent custody of the child, application by the adoptive parent shall be made to the public children services agency (PCSA) in the county in which the PCPA is located. The adoptive parents must provide the PCSA with a copy of the ODJFS 01616 "Social and Medical History" completed on the child for whom the subsidy is being requested and a copy of the adoptive parents' completed ODJFS 01673 "Assessment for Child Placement" (homestudy).

State Administered Subsidy Programs

- **Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS):** PASSS is a program available to all adoptive parents with a special needs child. The program is designed to assist families in crisis with special services needed to maintain the adoption. Families can obtain an application from the Agency and can apply throughout the year. Each child may be eligible for the limit specified by ODJFS per year for special services, if approved by the Agency Committee and Director, provided funding is available. PASSS is not available to step-parent adoption.

Fee for Services and Religious Affiliation

Lorain County Children Services does not charge for adoptive home study services or supervision of an adoption, and there is no religious affiliation required. In addition, Lorain County Children Services may not receive contributions, payment or other consideration from foster/adoptive applicants.

Pre-Finalization Services

Lorain County Children Services shall provide or arrange for the following pre-finalization services to adoptive families as appropriate: Case management, counseling, crisis services, and referrals for diagnostic or therapeutic services. Prior to the adoptive placement Lorain County Children Services shall provide the adoptive parent with: the Child Study Inventory, Adoption Information Disclosure Form (JFS 01667), information regarding child specific financial and medical resources, information regarding subsidies, the child's Life Book, birth parents first name, child's social security number, materials the birth parents request be given to the adopted person (per ODJFS 01693), including photographs of the birth parents that the birth parents requested be given to the adoptive parent or adoptee (if applicable). Foster-to-Adopt families may choose to continue receiving their board rate while on adoptive status until finalization or begin receiving their Adoption Assistance Subsidy. Adoptive families will begin to receive Adoption Assistance Subsidies while on adoptive status for six months and after finalization.

Post Finalization Services

Lorain County Children Services does not have a post finalization service program; however, the agency is available to provide or arrange for crisis intervention services, referrals for therapeutic services and respite by contacting us and requesting assistance. Post finalization services may be made available through Lorain County Children Services or another agency upon the request of adoptive families who have had an adoptive placement through a private or public agency within Ohio or from another state.

Non-Discrimination Process

Lorain County Children Services has a non-discriminatory standard for all foster/adoptive inquiries or applicants to assure that the agency's recruitment plan and all recruitment materials maintain compliance with the following: Multiethnic Placement Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901 et seq. as amended, and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89. The Agency will also not use standards related to income, age, education, family structure and size or ownership of housing which would exclude groups of prospective foster and/or adoptive parents.

Complaint Process

If you feel that you have been discriminated against due to race, color or national origin, or allege a complaint involving a discriminatory act, policy or practice, you have the opportunity to file a complaint or grievance. If you feel that you have been discriminated against and wish to file a complaint, you must complete the "Discrimination Complaint Form" (JFS 02333). This complaint may be filed with any of the following:

- Lorain County Children Services
Attn: Jane Robertson, MEPA Monitor
226 Middle Avenue
Elyria, OH 44035
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Bureau of Civil Rights
30 E. Broad Street, 37th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-3414
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Chief Counsel, Region V
233 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 700

Chicago, Illinois 60601

- Any other public or private Ohio foster care or adoption agency

If the complaint is filed with Lorain County Children Services' MEPA Monitor or with any other public or private Ohio foster care or adoption agency, the MEPA Monitor or other public or private agency must forward the complaint within 3 business days to the Bureau of Civil Rights of ODJFS for investigation. ODJFS must complete the investigation within 90 days of receipt of the complaint, unless unusual circumstances prevent it from completing the investigation within that time frame. ODJFS will provide a copy of the investigation report to the complainant and to the agency that is the subject of the complaint.

State Hearing Rights

Families have the right to request a state hearing when they do not agree with a decision regarding their approval or denial of the federal or state subsidy request; or if a family believes that an adoptive placement was denied or will be denied solely for the reasons of geographic location of the family. Requests for a state hearing can be made directly through the local agency or by contacting ODJFS at Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Bureau of State Hearings, PO Box 182825, Columbus, Ohio 43218-2825.

Grievance Procedure

Lorain County Children Services has developed a grievance procedure for those foster/adoptive individuals who do not agree with a decision made by the agency. If you want to file a grievance, you can contact the following:

- Your caseworker or their supervisor
- FBC supervisor or manager
- Lorain County Children Services Ombudsman

Once you have contacted one of the above, they will provide you with the applicable paperwork to continue with the grievance process. All grievances will be handled according to our procedure and any unresolved grievances will be handled by the highest administrator within 30 days.

Standards of Conduct

Standards of Conduct are attached to this policy and provided within the inquiry packet, given to families within seven days of inquiring.

