

**SERVICE PLAN & AGREEMENT (DC, MD, VA)**  
**(INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION – LOCAL SERVICES)**

This Service Plan & Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into by and between THE BARKER ADOPTION FOUNDATION (“Barker”) and

AP1Fname\*

AP1Lname\*

and

AP2Fname

AP2Lname

(“Adopting Parents”). The Adopting Parents are pursuing an adoption from

(Country) through

(Placement Agency). Barker is to provide home study and post placement services to the Adopting Parents. Both parties agree to the following terms, conditions, and obligations as they work together in relation to placement of a child for adoption:

**ARTICLE 1**

**BARKER SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Barker agrees to:

1.1 Provide home study and post-placement services in accordance with all applicable Federal,

State, and/or District of Columbia regulations, requirements of Placement Agency, as well as those of the “Sending Country,” as defined by

1.1 Provide home study and post-placement services in accordance with all applicable Federal, State, and/or District of Columbia regulations, requirements of Placement Agency, as well as those of the “Sending Country,” as defined by

1.2 Provide information to Adopting Parents on current international and domestic adoption programs, as requested;

1.3 Provide pre-adoption group training and other educational courses designed to prepare and educate Adopting Parents concerning general adoption issues, as well as those specific to domestic and/or international adoption as applicable, including the adoption process, and the characteristics, needs, and issues of children needing adoptive homes;

1.4 Provide guidance to assist Adopting Parents in completing the home study process, including documentation paperwork, home study interviews, and dossier paperwork where required by the international program’s Sending Country;

1.5 Provide guidance to Adopting Parents on how to submit the home study to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“CIS”);

1.6 Submit the home study to Placement Agency upon completion;

1.7 Provide guidance, including referrals as necessary, to Adopting Parents throughout the adoption process, post-placement period, and the post-adoption process;

1.8 Provide a minimum of three post-placement supervisory visits, with additional contacts as deemed necessary by the Adoptive Parents’ social worker and/or supervisor and/or agency holding legal custody of the child and/or the placement agency, or as required by the State, District of Columbia, or Sending Country;

1.9 Prepare and submit post-placement written reports as required by the Placement Agency, Sending Country and satisfy any other Hague post-placement requirements;

1.10 Provide information on cultural resources, therapeutic, and educational services, and other community resources, as available and requested by the Adopting Parents;

1.11 Assist Adopting Parents with adoption finalization and naturalization procedures pursuant to U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulations;

1.12 Invoice Adopting Parents in accordance with Barker’s International Adoption Fee Agreement defined in part below at Articles 2.25 and 3.8. The applicable Fee Agreement signed by Adopting Parents is hereby incorporated into this Agreement by reference;

1.13 Report child abuse or neglect by Adopting Parents as obligated by law and in accordance with Barker’s policy on the Prohibition on Corporal Punishment discussed below in Article 3.7;

1.14 Reserve the right to remove the child from Adopting Parents' care prior to adoption finalization, if in Barker's professional judgment, the continuation of placement is not in the best interest of the child; and

1.15 Hold in strict confidence all information and documentation on Adopting Parents and on the referral of any children.

## ARTICLE 2

### ADOPTING PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS

Adopting Parents agree to:

2.1 Comply with all applicable Federal, State, and/or District of Columbia laws and regulations pertaining to international adoption, as well as with the laws and regulations of the Sending Country;

2.2 Comply with Barker's pre-adoption group training and online learning requirements; and understand and accept that Barker will not approve a home study until its educational requirements are met in full, unless an exemption is granted for previous learning that duplicates Barker's curriculum;

2.3 Collect and submit required paperwork for the home study/home study update in a timely manner; Adopting Parents understand that failure to do so could result in delay of the process and/or in closure of their case;

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2.4 Be available for home study, home study updates, and post-placement supervisory interviews with Barker social workers at mutually convenient times Monday through Friday during business hours;

2.5 Disclose all requested information to Barker during the home study, placement, and post-placement process; Adopting Parents understand and accept that failure to disclose information or their misrepresentation of information could result in disapproval of the home study and/or in withdrawal of home study approval;

2.6 Strive to provide Barker staff with an honest and realistic assessment of the age of and medical conditions acceptable in the child whom Adopting Parents seek to adopt;

2.7 File the Citizenship and Immigration Service forms as required for inter-country adoption. Adopting Parents are responsible for monitoring the expiration of immigration approval (I-171H) and shall contact Barker four months prior to expiration, to ensure continuous approval until placement;

2.8 Keep Barker staff informed of major changes in family and/or any anticipated changes in family. Specifically, until the formal post-placement supervision is complete, Adoptive Parents shall inform Barker staff of the following: any marital changes (separation, divorce, or death of one or the Adopting Parents); a decision to start the foster or adoptive process through another agency or the receiving of a child placement through another agency; any new medical conditions of Adopting Parents; relocation to a new residence; additional people moving into and/or living in the household since the time of the initial home study; changes in employment of Adopting Parents; arrests or involvement of any family members with law enforcement or child protective agencies. Adopting Parents must give notification of such changes or occurrences to Barker within ten (10) days of the change or occurrence; If at any time during the adoption process (any time before the adoption is legally finalized) an applicant is arrested for driving under the influence, the adoption approval will be placed on hold until the adjudication of the case. If convicted, the adoption application will be closed and the applicant is eligible to re-apply in five years;

2.9 Care for the child with love and affection, and provide for his/her social, physical, emotional, educational, and medical needs. Adopting Parents are totally responsible for the care and support of the child, including medical, counseling/psychiatric expenses, child care, and legal and/or miscellaneous expenses upon placement. Adopting Parents must inform Barker of major medical, surgical, and dental treatment needed by a child prior to finalization of adoption. If the child cannot be covered by the family's medical/hospitalization insurance plans, it is the responsibility of the Adopting Parents to obtain a separate policy for the child. Adopting Parents understand and accept the policy that they must have medical insurance coverage for children placed for adoption, effective at date of placement;

2.16 Adhere to the Agency policy that a parent will stay home full-time with the child for at least six weeks following the child's arrival in the United States. Whenever possible, Barker encourages parents to take at least three months' leave.

2.17 Cooperate fully with Barker's requirement that the Agency conduct a minimum of three post-placement supervisory visits and written reports, with additional contacts and/or

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reports as deemed necessary by the Barker social worker and/or supervisor and/or agency holding legal custody of the child, or by Placement Agency, or by the Sending Country; Adopting Parents agree to make themselves available at mutually convenient times during business hours, Monday through Friday, for these visits to ensure timely completion of the reports, and to provide written progress reports and medical evaluations of the child to the social worker at each post-placement visit.

Examples of additional post-placement requirements of Sending Countries:

China: Four additional reports at twelve months, two years, three years, and five years and proof of finalization of Adoption Decree, and proof of U.S. citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship)

Colombia: Three additional reports at nine months, fifteen months, and twenty-one months and proof of finalization of Adoption Decree, and proof of U.S. citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship)

India: Three additional reports at twelve months, eighteen months, and twenty-four months, and proof of finalization of Adoption Decree, and proof of U.S. citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship)

Korea: Three additional reports at two months, nine months, and twelve months, and proof of finalization of Adoption Decree, and proof of U.S. citizenship (Certificate of Citizenship)

2.18 In the event they move out-of-State, or the District of Columbia if applicable, during the post-placement supervisory period, to work with Barker to fulfill the post-placement obligation through a supervised networking agency identified or accepted by Barker in the new State of residence;

2.19 Comply with the legal process of finalizing/re-finalizing the adoption, according to requirements and regulations of the State, District of Columbia if applicable, the Sending Country, and Barker; and understand and accept responsibility for all legal costs associated with finalization/re-finalization, a process that cannot take place until the child has been in the adoptive home for at least six months;

2.20 Not transfer the physical custody of the child from their home without Barker's prior consent during the post-placement supervisory period, should Barker retain legal custody of the child;

2.21 Act promptly to file for U.S. citizenship for the child immediately following the adoption if U.S. citizenship is not automatically granted (as in Guardianship cases and other IR-4 visa cases), retaining responsibility for associated fees;

2.22 Keep Barker advised of their current address, Email addresses, and telephone numbers, in order to be able to receive correspondence and updated information that may be added to their adoption file;

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2.23 Accept that Barker cannot guarantee the placement of a child, the accuracy of projected time frames, and the length of process; these are subject to change at any time and include multiple variables beyond Barker's control;

2.24 Should significant concerns arise among Barker staff that it is not in the child's best interest for him or her to remain in the care of Adopting Parents, Barker will develop an intervention plan with the Placement Agency when applicable. Adoptive Parents also understand that they may request a child's removal from their home in the event unforeseen circumstances detrimental to the child's or their family's welfare arise prior to finalization/re-finalization of the adoption. Adoptive Parents acknowledge, understand, and fully accept that although they may request that a child be removed from their home, Barker and its employees, officers, directors, agents or independent contractors, past or present, are under no obligation to accept custody of, or legal or financial responsibility for, the child, or arrange for replacement of the child, except in cases where Barker retains legal guardianship during the post-placement period. Adoptive Parents agree to give sufficient notice to Barker if they believe an intervention plan is needed, to enable appropriate arrangements for the

child's care. Adoptive Parents acknowledge their responsibility to cooperate with Barker throughout the process and, if Barker does not hold legal custody, they agree to assume all costs related to the child's removal, including but not limited to health insurance, legal/court fees, travel, transportation, physical or mental health evaluation, and foster care. In addition, Adoptive Parents agree to submit all the child's personal and legal documents, i.e., birth certificate, passport, and resident alien card to Barker. If Barker remains the legal guardian during the post-placement supervisory period, Adoptive Parents acknowledge and accept Barker's legal obligation and authority to remove the child from their family and terminate the child's relationship with them, prior to finalization of the adoption, should it be deemed necessary in Barker's professional judgment;

2.25 Agree to submit payment of all fees promptly and in full upon invoicing as per Barker's International Adoption Fee Agreement;

2.26 In addition, Adopting Parents agree that they do not have convictions, are under indictment, or possess substantial evidence of their involvement in any criminal activity involving violence against a person, child abuse or neglect, serious sexual misconduct, gross irresponsibility or disregard for the safety of others, serious violations of accepted standards or ethical misconduct. Adoptive Parents also agree to report all cases in which they have been fingerprinted in conjunction with any criminal act. They will provide to Barker a record of offenses and case disposition. They also understand that they must complete criminal/child abuse history forms as required by their state or local governments and that any new violations occurring during the adoption process must be reported immediately to Barker; and

2.27 Adoptive Parents acknowledge the following assumptions of risk and hereby release Barker from liability as follows:

2.27.1 Adoptive Parents acknowledge that Barker has provided them with information regarding the risks of international adoptions, including the attached sheet. They understand that Barker cannot warrant the accuracy of any medical information of a child where such information is provided by a foreign country. Additionally, they understand there are events

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that may occur during the adoption process that are beyond the control of Barker. They assume the risk that is associated with international adoption and the uncertainty about the accuracy of the medical information they shall receive.

2.27.2 Adoptive Parents acknowledge that the child referral information may be limited or erroneous in general information, parental/family background, genetic information, prenatal care, child birth, postnatal care, present or past child care, current physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and developmental status or previous history. They assume this risk.

2.27.3 Adoptive Parents acknowledge that it is their responsibility to seek out whatever medical, developmental, and psychological evaluations of the child referral information provided by Barker they deem necessary to make an informed decision as to whether they should accept a referral. They acknowledge that Barker is not able to provide medical advice or any explanations of medical issues.

2.27.4 Adoptive Parents release Barker and its employees, officers, directors, trustees, agents or independent contractors, past or present, from any and all liability, other than for intentional misconduct, recklessness, or gross negligence, for any and all claims and liabilities relating to the physical, mental or emotional health of any child referred to us, or adopted by us, in a foreign country or in the United States.

The obligations, waivers, and assumptions of risk of both parties under this Article 2.27 survive any termination of this Agreement, subject to applicable statutes of limitation.

2.27.5 Adoptive Parents specifically waive any claim against Barker, its employees, officers, directors, trustees, agents or independent contractors, past or present, for the accuracy, completeness, implications, predictive nature, or other matters whether known or unknown, regarding the information that Adoptive Parents received prior to the arrival of their child in the United States, or prior to or during their trip overseas to adopt their child. Adoptive Parents waive any claim should their child develop illnesses, mental health problems, or other difficulties due to matters related to the health information they received with their referral. This agreement to waive all claims against Barker is not intended to encompass any intentional misconduct, recklessness, or gross negligence on behalf of the Agency.

### **ARTICLE 3**

#### **BARKER POLICIES**

Adoptive Parents have read, accept, and agree to comply with the following Barker policies to the extent applicable to their adoption:

##### 3.1 Home Studies

3.1.1 Barker offers adoption preparation and home study services but does not under any circumstance guarantee the approval of a home study. The Agency is dedicated to making placements that it considers to be in the best interest of the child. Applicants who wish to adopt a child (“applicants”) must be in good physical and mental health and ready to provide a

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safe and nurturing environment for an adopted child. They must be capable of dealing with the challenges inherent in the process of adopting a child internationally.

3.1.2 All applicants must provide complete and accurate information on their adoption application. Applicants must demonstrate that they are in good physical and mental health with a normal life expectancy. If drug/alcohol or other addictions/dependencies are a part of the applicants’ history, they must demonstrate at least three consecutive years of recovery in addition to participation in either a specialized addictions treatment program and/or a twelve step program. Further, if the

applicant has an alcohol or other drug-related arrest and conviction at anytime in their history, the applicant(s) must provide arrest and court records and three years must have elapsed since the time of the arrest. In either case, in order to make a complete assessment, the Barker Foundation reserves to right to request an additional independent evaluation completed by an appropriate specialist.

3.1.3 Home studies conducted by Barker are the property of the Agency and can only be used for the purposes agreed upon by both Barker and the applicants; Barker’s home study document specifies approval for a particular kind of adoption (e.g., adoption from a particular program, age of the child, gender of the child, any special needs, number of children in birth family, etc.). Change to this approval requires mutual reassessment.

3.1.4 Barker offers adoption services, but cannot guarantee placement of a child, nor can Barker guarantee a specific age of a child at the time of placement. No one can credibly make this guarantee because international adoptions are controlled by foreign governments that can change their rules or close the adoption process with or without notice.

### 3.2 Gender Selection

Barker encourages applicants wherever possible to remain open to the referral of a boy or a girl. The Agency believes that families who remain open as to the gender of their child are best able to accept the varied uncertainties that come with adoption and parenting, including any individual needs of their child. In some instances, Barker permits applicants to express gender preferences, as for example when such expression is allowed by the Sending Country and/or when such requests do not pose unreasonable delays to other applicants or to children waiting to be adopted.

### 3.3 Infertility, Pregnancy, and Multiple Placements

The addition of a child to a family involves consideration, preparation, and adjustment. To ensure the best transition for the child and the family, and to ensure the child’s successful placement, it is Barker’s policy not to have two or more unrelated children enter a family at the same time, nor does Barker allow two active adoptions at the same time. Applicants may submit a second application to Barker following finalization of the first adoption and completion of the six-month post-placement supervisory period. Thus, with the exception of biological siblings, families will only be approved for placement of one child at a time.

Barker does not permit prospective applicants to start the adoption process if they are pregnant or undergoing infertility treatment. If an applicant becomes pregnant during a pending

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adoption, she is required to notify the Agency as soon as possible and discuss the situation with the appropriate director or social worker. Barker reserves the right to place the applicant in a “hold” status. In the case of an international adoption, “hold” status may include withdrawing the individual’s dossier/home study packet from consideration by foreign agencies/officials and/or withdrawing any pending referral. Certain countries, for example South Korea, require Barker to put pregnant applicants in a “hold” status, in which case the Agency has no discretion to do otherwise.

### 3.4 Ethical Practices

Barker provides adoption services ethically and in accordance with the Hague Convention’s principles of: ensuring that both domestic and intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of children; and preventing the abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children.

The Agency prohibits its employees and agents from giving money or other consideration, directly or indirectly, to a child’s parent(s), other individual(s), or an entity as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child. If permitted or required by the child’s country of origin, the Agency may remit reasonable payments for activities related to the adoption proceedings, pre-birth and birth medical costs, the care of the child, the care of the birth mother while pregnant and immediately following birth, or the provision of child welfare and child protection services generally.

### 3.5 Grievances and Complaints

Applicants may appeal the clinical decisions of professional Barker staff and file a complaint concerning violations of the Hague Convention as provided below.

#### 3.5.1 Review of Professional Staff Decisions (Clinical Decisions):

(a) Applicants who have (i) been accepted for home study and thereafter have had the home study process discontinued by professional staff decision, or (ii) adopted a child from the Agency and been refused an application to adopt another child, have the right to appeal that decision.

(b) Barker shall give applicants who fall under Article 3.5.1(a)(i) or 3.5.1(a)(ii) written notice and explanation of that decision, as well as an explanation of the appeal process, by professional Barker staff.

(c) All applicants who are in either situation (a)(i) or (a)(ii) above, and who wish to appeal a staff decision, may meet with the Executive Director to discuss their concerns. The Executive Director has the responsibility to reevaluate each situation and notify the applicant(s) and the staff regarding the future course of action.

(d) Applicants who wish to appeal the Executive Director’s decision may petition the Licensing Board of the appropriate jurisdiction.

(e) If applicants are disputing an Executive Director’s decision that may be considered “non-clinical” concerning 1) any services or activities of the Agency that require the

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Executive Director’s review, and 2) issues related to compliance with the Hague Convention (including the Agency’s use of supervised providers), or the regulations implementing the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (IAA), the applicant will follow the procedures for registering complaints as outlined below in Article 3.5.2.

#### 3.5.2 Review of Non-Clinical Decisions

(a) Barker encourages birth parents, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, and adopted persons to bring to the Agency’s attention complaints concerning: 1) services or activities of the Agency that require the Agency’s management review; and 2) issues related to compliance with the Hague Convention (including its use of supervised providers), or the regulations implementing the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (IAA).

(b) Each complaint must be in writing, signed, and dated and sent to the attention of the Executive Director of The Barker Adoption Foundation.

(c) Each complaint must identify the service in question or the nature of the Hague Convention violation, the date or timeframe of the service or violation, and the expected resolution.

(d) The Agency shall send a letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint, and the Executive Director shall respond in writing to all written complaints within 30 days of receipt, giving priority and expedited review, as appropriate, to matters that are time-sensitive or involve allegations of fraud.

(e) If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint from the Executive Director, the complainant may lodge the complaint directly with the Agency’s Board of Directors, the Agency’s accreditation authority, or with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of State (“Secretary”). If the complaint is lodged with the Agency’s Board of Directors, the Executive Committee of the Board will review the complaint and respond in writing within thirty days of receipt, giving expedited review, as appropriate, to matters that are time-sensitive or involve allegations of fraud. Furthermore, the Agency shall comply promptly with any requests by accreditation authorities or the Secretary to view complaint records. *See also, Complaint Supplement.*

### 3.6 Charitable Donations

While philanthropic contributions are welcomed, Barker nonetheless must ensure that such donations do not in any way influence child placement decisions. Accordingly, the Barker Foundation will not solicit or accept monetary or in-kind contributions from individuals who have applied to adopt a child. Such individuals are designated as “in-service” clients, and monetary and in-kind donations shall not be solicited or accepted from them until they have fulfilled Barker’s post-placement supervisory requirements and a legal adoption is completed and documented with a Final Decree of Adoption. When these requirements have been met, the adoptive parent(s) is designated as an “out-of-service” client(s) whose charitable donations are permitted. Such a policy is meant to ensure that the welfare of the child is at all times paramount, without any undue influence upon the normal adoption procedures of the Agency.

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### 3.7 Prohibition on Corporal Punishment

Barker specifically prohibits the use of corporal punishment with children who are in Agency care or who are under Agency supervision, and discourages any subsequent use of corporal punishment in parenting. Corporal punishment is defined as “the inflicting of pain or discomfort. Prohibited actions include but are not limited to, hitting a child with any part of the body or with an implement,

pinching, pulling, shaking, or binding a child, forcing him/her to assume an uncomfortable position, or locking him/her in a closet. The prohibition is in effect whether punishment is spontaneous or a deliberate technique for effective behavioral change, or part of a behavior management program.”

### 3.8 Refund of Fees

Barker has established a fee structure permitting applicants to pay agency fees in phases over the course of the adoption process. Because Barker’s work with applicants is ongoing, and because applicants pay fees for adoption services rather than for children, any payment of Barker’s agency fees for services already rendered is nonrefundable. On a case-by-case basis, Barker may refund a portion of its agency fees upon approval of the Executive Director. In such situations, Barker will return the funds to applicants within sixty days of the completion of the delivery of services.

The refunding of international fees varies by country. Although Barker will make a diligent effort to obtain refunds of any international fees paid to a foreign authority/service provider/contractor, it cannot guarantee a refund. If applicants withdraw from the adoption process for any reason, or if the adoption fails for any reason, Barker cannot guarantee the return of any portion of the international fees. If fees are returned, Barker will approve the refund decision and return the fees to the applicants within sixty days.

## ARTICLE 4

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### 4.1 Entire Agreement

The entire agreement of the parties is contained herein, and this Agreement supersedes all oral and written communications between the parties related to the subject and terms of this Agreement.

#### 4.2 Amendment of Agreement

Any amendment to this Agreement must be in writing and signed by each of the signatories below.

#### 4.3 No Third Party Beneficiaries

Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed or be deemed to create any rights or remedies in any third party, including, but not limited to, relatives of Adopting Parents.

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#### 4.4 Severability

Should any portion or provision of this Agreement be held unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remaining portions or provisions shall be unaffected, provided, however, if the portion(s) or provision(s) of this Agreement deemed unenforceable or invalid affect Barker's ability to perform any service under this Agreement, then the Agreement shall be terminated, with Adopting Parents responsible for payment of all services rendered prior to termination.

**We have read the preceding Service Plan and Agreement, and we understand and accept the risks, conditions, and responsibilities associated with [international] adoption.**

Applicant 1 Full Name (please print)

AP1Fname\*

AP1MName

AP1Lname\*

Applicant 1 Signature\*

Date

Applicant 2 Full Name (please print)

AP2Fname

AP2MName

AP2Lname

Applicant 2 Signature\*

Date

Barker Program

Director's Signature

\*

Date

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## The Barker Adoption Foundation- Complaint Supplement

**Complaint Policy:** It is the policy and practice of The Barker Adoption Foundation (“Barker”) to encourage birth parents, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, and adopted persons to bring to the Barker’s attention: 1) concerns regarding any of the services or activities of Barker that he or she believes requires review; and 2) 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, the UAA, or the regulations implementing the IAA or UAA [22 CFR 96.41(b)]. Complaints are accepted at any time. *HTG E.6.* When a complaint is lodged it is the policy of Barker to advise complainants of the additional procedures available to them if they are dissatisfied with the agency’s or person’s response to their complaint. 22 CFR 96.41(b).

It is the policy and practice of Barker to accept and to respond in writing to complaints received pursuant to 96.41(b) of within thirty days of receipt of the signed and dated complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was an outgrowth or a non-Convention of non-UAA case. 22 CFR 96.41(c). See also *HTG E.6a.* Further, it is the practice of Barker to provide expedited review of such complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud. 22 CFR 96.41(c). Barker’s initial response to the complainant, provided within thirty days or less shall be as close to complete as possible. *HTG E.9.* It is the policy and practice of Barker to maintain an electronic written record of each complaint received pursuant to 96.41(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. 22 CFR 96.41(d).

Further, Barker believes that constructive feedback is important for growth and quality improvement. Barker 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. 22 CFR 96.41(e). Rather, it is the policy and practice of Barker to encourage expressions of frustration and concern.

It is the policy and practice of Barker to provide to the accrediting entity and the Secretary, on a semi-annual basis, a summary of all complaints received pursuant to 96.41(b) 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 96.41(b), along with information about what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by the agency or person in response to such patterns. 22 CFR 96.41(f). It is the policy and practice for Barker to strictly follow IAAME’s [Policy 004](#). In addition to providing complaint information in the Semi-Annual Report on Complaints provided to IAAME, Barker provides any information about complaints received pursuant to 96.41(b) as may be requested by the accrediting entity or the Secretary [22 CFR 96.41(g)] and as per IAAME’s [Policy 005](#). It is the policy and practice to utilize any complaints received pursuant to 96.41(b) as a part of its quality improvement system to improve adoption services as needed. 22 CFR 96.41(h).

### Concern/ Complaint Procedures

**Step 1: Informing Prospective Adoptive Parents of the Grievance Process** - Barker outlines the grievance procedure for clients as part of the Adoption Services Contract. Barker staff is available for questions regarding the Adoption Services Contract and complaint policies and procedures throughout the duration of the adoption process and thereafter. Barker staff members encourage critical feedback and shall not retaliate against any complainant.

**Step 2: Initial Resolution Effort** - When a client family, birth parent, adoptive parent, or adopted persons indicate a concern, the individual Barker staff member receiving the concern may attempt to resolve the issue or misunderstanding. The receiving staff member may also consult with his or her colleagues, supervisor and/or the Executive Director in an effort to achieve a front-line resolution for the complainant.

**Step 3: Supervisor Resolution Effort** - If the complainant is not satisfied or the concern otherwise cannot be resolved, the staff member receiving the concern shall consult with his/her supervisor for support in resolving the concern to the satisfaction of the complainant. The supervisor may contact the complainant regarding the concern for a resolution.

**Step 4: Director Resolution Effort** - If the complainant is not satisfied or the concern otherwise cannot be resolved at the supervisor level, the supervisor shall consult with his/her director for support in resolving the concern to the satisfaction of the complainant. The director may contact the complainant regarding the concern for a resolution.

**Step 5: Submission of Written Complaint** - If the concern is not resolved at the director level to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant will be instructed to follow Barker’s complaint procedure and submit a written complaint. If the complainant is a client family, the Barker team member in contact with the complainant will direct the complainant to their Service Plan or Adoption Service Agreement containing the procedures for complaining or provide the complainant instructions/procedures directly. If the complainant is not a client family of Barker (birth parent, adopted person, etc.), the Barker staff member in contact with the complainant will explain the complaint procedures and provide such procedures in writing to the complainant and provide any necessary or desired instruction on submission of the same. Each complaint must be made in writing, signed and dated and sent to the attention of the Executive Director/CEO of Barker either by mail or email. If the complaint is about the Executive Director/CEO, the written complaint will be signed, and dated and sent to the attention of Barker’s Board of Trustees.

**Step 6: Review of Complaint and 96.41(b) Determination** - The complaint will be reviewed by Barker’s Executive Director/CEO and Senior Director of Clinical and Support Services (“DCS”). During the review, the CEO and DCS will consult 96.41(b) and determine whether the signed and dated document is a 96.41(b) complaint. Said determination will be noted in the client’s record. If it is determined that the complaint is a 96.41(b) complaint the DCS or her designee will add the complaint, and 96.41(b) determination to Barker’s “Complaint File.”

**Step 7: Due Diligence Investigation of 96.41(b) Complaint** - The DCS is responsible for the complaint due diligence investigation and documentation of said investigation in Barker’s Complaint File for 96.41(b) complaints. An investigation is consulted for all concerns, though only 96.41(b) complaints and 96.41(b) due diligence investigations will be documented in the Complaint File. The DCS will attempt to complete the due diligence investigation within 25 days of receipt of the complaint if possible, allowing sufficient time for drafting and finalizing Barker’s written response to complainant. The due diligence investigation will depend on the issues raised and will be conducted on a case by case basis. The due diligence investigation may include review of client case file, review of foreign supervised provider file, conducting interviews with relevant staff, foreign supervised providers, and any applicable domestic or foreign entities, and any other actions deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the DCS. The DCS or her designee will create a summary of findings for each issue alleged by the complainant for review by the CEO.

**Step 8: Barker Response** - The CEO will provide a written response within thirty days of receipt of the signed and dated complaint to the complainant that addresses the issues alleged as completely as possible. The response will also outline the complainant regarding their opportunity to appeal to Barker’s Board of Trustees if the complainant is not satisfied with the CEO’s response by writing to the Board directly within fourteen (14) days of receipt of Barker’s response. The complainant will be instructed to include in the Request for Review the reasons for disagreement with the CEO’s decision and the outcome desired by the individual. The DCS will ensure this response is saved to the Complaint File.

**Step 9: Appeal Review** - If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint from the Executive Director/CEO, the complainant may lodge the complaint directly with Barker’s Board of Trustees, Barker’s accreditation authority or with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of State. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Request for Review, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees will review the original complaint, Barker’s response, and the written appeal. The Board may also review Barker’s due diligence investigation and/or summary findings. The Board, at its discretion may conduct its own investigation.

**Step 10: Final Agency Action** - Barker’s Board of Trustees will respond to the complainant in writing within 60 days of receiving the written request for appeal and indicate that such a response is the final agency action. The Final Decision will include either of the following: 1) a statement supporting the CEO’s decision; or 2) a decision to reverse the CEO’s decision and a recommended plan for resolution. The Final Decision will be considered Barker’s final agency action. To the extent the complaint is time sensitive or contains allegations of fraud, the Board will undertake an expedited review of the complaint and the complainant may be given an opportunity to attend the deliberation in person or by telephone conference.

**Step 11: Record Maintenance** - It is the responsibility of the DCS to record and maintain all records related to the 96.41(b) complaint in the Complaint File. Upon the final agency action, the DCS will review and ensure all complaints, responses, summaries and supporting documentation from the due diligence investigation are filed, organized and available for review by IAAME or the U.S. Department of State.

**Step 12: Reporting the Complaint** - The DCS will ensure that the International Program Director (“IPD”) is at all times apprised of the complaint and responses. The IPD is responsible for completing the Semi-Annual Report on Complaints (“SARC”). The IPD shall calendar and track the due dates for the SARC report to ensure timely submission and report pursuant to the instructions outlined in IAAME’s [Policy 004](#). Barker’s IPD will provide to IAAME, on a semi-annual basis and upon its request at other times, a summary of all written complaints received during the preceding six months, which shall include the number of complaints received, how each complaint was resolved, and an assessment of any discernible patterns in such complaints, along with information about what systemic changes, if any, were made or are planned by the Agency in response to such patterns.

**Step 13: Complaint Quality Improvement Plan** - The DCS is responsible for ensuring that the complaint information is assessed and any necessary plans for correction are made and implemented pursuant to Barker’s Quality Improvement Program. Such assessment and improvement efforts shall also be included in the Complaint File as they are completed.