

## **Policies and Procedures/Important Information**

### **Fire Arms in Adoptive Homes:**

1. Weapons, firearms, explosive materials and projectiles (such as darts or arrows) are permitted in Adoptive homes under the following conditions:
  - a. All firearms must be locked with a trigger guard lock and stored under lock and key.
  - b. Weapons, explosive materials and projectiles must be kept under lock and key.
  - c. All ammunition must be stored separately from firearms and weapons and stored in a locked container.
2. Adoption Parents may not transport a child in a vehicle where a handgun is present unless the handgun has been issued to the caregiver as part of that person's employment as a law enforcement official.
3. Adoption Parents may transport a child in a vehicle where firearms (not handguns), other weapons, explosive materials, or projectiles are present if:
  4. All firearms are not loaded; and
  5. The firearms, other weapons, explosive materials, or projectiles are inaccessible to the child.
  6. Any Adoption Parent violating this policy will be subject to immediate closure of the home.

### **Swimming and Water Safety Policy:**

1. Children under age five (chronologically or developmentally) must be supervised at all times in a bathtub.
2. Adults or persons certified in water safety must supervise child and children around any bodies of water at all times. This includes swimming and wading pools, hot tubs, stock ponds, creeks, rivers, lakes, oceans, or bays.
3. Adoption Parents who have a pool or body of water on their property must

successfully complete a water safety course.

4. Life jackets must be worn by all child and children who engage in boating activities and by child and children who are in more than two feet of water and do not know how to swim or when ordered by a physician for a child with a medical problem or disability.
5. Hot tubs which are separate from an enclosed pool area must be covered with a locking cover when not in use.
6. Swimming pools must have physical barriers designed to limit access. Barriers include fences or walls, and pool safety covers.
7. Fences and walls around pools must be at least four feet high and well-constructed (the Red Cross recommends vertical fencing and the openings in the fence should be no more than four inches wide); these barriers must be installed completely around the pool.
8. Fence gates must be self-closing, self-latching, and locked when the pool is not in use. Keys to the gates must not be accessible to child and children under the age of 16 years old or child and children receiving treatment services.
9. Doors that lead from the home to the pool area must have a lock that only adults or child and children over 10 years old can reach. The lock must be completely out of the reach of child and children younger than 10 years old.
10. Furniture, equipment or large materials must not be close enough to the pool area for a child to use them to scale the fence or release a lock.
11. At least two life-saving devices must be available, such as a reach pole, backboard, buoy, or a safety throw bag with a brightly colored buoyant rope or throw line. One additional life-saving device must be available for each 2,000 square feet of water surface, so a pool of 2,000 square feet would require three life saving devices.
12. Drain grates must be in place, in good repair and capable of being removed only with tools.
13. Caregivers must be able to clearly see all parts of the swimming area when supervising activity in the area
14. The bottom of the pool must be visible at all times.
15. Pool covers must be completely removed prior to pool use.
16. Pool chemicals and pumps must be inaccessible to all child and children.
17. All Minimum Standards including child/adult ratios for swimming activities

must be met at all times.

- a. Adoption Parents must also comply with all local and county ordinances.

### **Fire Prevention and Emergencies:**

#### 1. Fire Prevention:

- a. Each foster home will participate in a fire drill twice a month at various times throughout the day and night. A record of these is to be turned in at the end of the month on the Fire Drill Form.
- b. Smoking is not allowed by any child in any of the Advantage Adoptions – OCOC Adoptive homes.
- c. Combustible materials must be stored in a separate area (i.e., gas for lawnmowers, cleaning fluids, paint, thinners, and cleaning fluids).
- d. Fire escape plans are posted in a location visible to the child.
- e. New child will be made aware of all fire extinguishers and exits.

#### 2. At the Sound of a Smoke Alarm

A. Assess the cause of the alarm.

B. If no smoke, fire, or other danger exists:

1. Determine the cause and conduct a careful search of all rooms.
2. Turn off and reset the smoke alarm.

C. If smoke, fire, or other danger exists:

1. Make sure all persons leave the home calmly and quickly, and meet in a previously designated area outside the home.
2. Call the Fire Department at 911.
3. Notify the on-call child placement management staff as soon as possible.
4. Clear all vehicles away from the home to allow quick entry of fire equipment.
5. No one should talk to any media personnel. Refer them to the Advantage Adoptions – OCOC Executive Director.

D. Whenever a fire extinguisher is used at all, it needs to be recharged as soon as possible.

E. Fire extinguishers should be checked for proper weight at least once a year.

F. There must be a fire extinguisher in each kitchen and on each level of the home.

G. There must be a working smoke detector in hallways, open areas outside sleeping

- rooms and on each level of a home with multiple levels.
- H. All Adoption homes must have fire inspections conducted per Minimum Standards.
  - I. Ladders must be available and accessible on the second story of the home.

### **Pets Owned by Adoptive Parents;**

1. The overall responsibility and ownership for pets rests with the Adoptive Parent. To keep pets other than dogs and cats, special permission must be granted by the child placement case management staff. All costs and maintenance of pets shall be the responsibility of the owner.
2. The following are required of all pets and owners:
3. All pets that are required by law to be licensed, examined, and vaccinated annually by a licensed veterinarian shall comply with the law. Vaccinations must be kept up to date. A copy of the pet's vaccination and examination records must be turned in to the Adoption care records clerk to be kept on file. The owner must keep the original record.
4. All animals must have collars and tags.
5. When a pet intimidates or threatens the well-being of a child, staff member, or other individual, the owner will receive a warning. Upon the second warning, the owner will be instructed to remove the pet from the home.
6. If a pet attacks or bites any individual, the owner must notify their child placement management staff immediately. The animal must be placed in quarantine at the veterinarian's office for a period of no less than ten (10) days. Any bites by pets are the responsibility of the owner. Before the animal returns to the Adoption home, a copy of the veterinarian release statement must be provided to the LCFAA.
7. Children are not to clean up after Adoption Parent's pets. If a child does provide care for the pet, they must be paid for this responsibility or the relationship between the child and pet must be agreed upon by the treatment team and written in the treatment plan.
8. Pets may not be given to the child by the Adoption parent unless prior permission has been received from the child's legal guardian.
9. Pets must have their own feeding and watering containers.
10. If a pet is not properly cared for (i.e., does not receive appropriate medical attention, food, water, shelter, physically abused, etc.), the child placement management staff will request the removal of the pet in writing and make a report to the SPCA regarding the concerns.

## Children's Rights:

1. Advantage Adoptions - OCOC Staff and Adoptive Parents are committed to children have every right guaranteed all citizens, while teaching them to respect the rights of others.
2. Because we are an organization concerned with child's rights, any report of suspected abuse or violation of rights will be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in accordance with the law. Investigations will follow as conducted or instructed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Advantage Adoptions – AA - OCOC Staff and Adoptive Parents will adhere to the DFPS children's rights, which read as follows:

1. To good care and treatment that meets my needs in the least restrictive setting available. This means I have the right to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable place. And I am protected from harm, treated with respect, and have some privacy for personal needs.
2. To know
  - Why am I in Adoption care?
  - What will happen to me?
  - What is happening to my family (including brothers and sisters) and how CPS is planning for my future?
3. To speak and be spoken to in my own language when possible. This includes Braille if I am blind or sign language if I am deaf. If my Adoptive parents do not know my language, CPS will give me a plan to meet my needs to communicate.
4. To be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
5. To fair treatment, whatever my gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, medical problems, or sexual orientation.
6. To not receive any harsh, cruel, unusual, unnecessary, demeaning, or humiliating punishment. This includes not being shaken, hit, spanked, or threatened, forced to do unproductive work, be denied food, sleep, access to a bathroom, mail, or family visits as punishment. I will not receive remarks that make fun of me or my family or any threats of losing my placement or shelter.
7. To be disciplined in a manner that is appropriate to how mature I am, my developmental level, and my medical condition. I must be told why I was disciplined. Discipline does not include the use of restraint, seclusion, corporal punishment or threat of corporal punishment.

8. To attend my choice of community, school, and religious services and activities to the extent that it is right for me, as planned for and discussed by my caregiver and caseworker, and based on my caregiver's ability.
9. To go to school and receive an education that fits my age and individual needs.
10. To be trained in personal care, hygiene, and grooming.
11. To comfortable clothing similar to clothing worn by other children in my community.
12. To clothing that does a good job of protecting me against natural elements such as rain, snow, wind, cold, sun, and insects.
13. To have personal possessions at my home and to get additional things within reasonable limits, as planned for and discussed by my caregiver and caseworker, and based on caregiver's ability.
14. To personal space in my bedroom to store my clothes and belongings.
15. To healthy foods in healthy portions proper for my age and activity level.
16. To good quality medical, dental, and vision care, developmental and mental health services that are at least adequate enough for my needs.
17. To be free from unnecessary or too much medication.
18. To visit and have regular contact with my family, including my brothers and sisters (unless a court order or case plan doesn't allow it) and to have my worker explain any restrictions to me and write them in my record.
19. To contact my caseworker, attorneys, ad litem, probation officer, CASA, and Advocacy, Inc. at any time. I can communicate with my caseworker, CASA, Advocacy, Inc. or my attorney ad litem without limits.
20. To see my caseworker at least monthly and in private if necessary.
21. To actively participate in creating my plan for my services and permanent living arrangement, and in meetings where my medical services are reviewed, as appropriate. To be given a copy or summary of my plan and to review. I have the right to ask someone to act on my behalf or to support me in my participation.
22. To go to my court hearing and speak to the judge.
23. To speak to the judge at a court hearing that affects where I have been placed including

status hearings, permanency hearings, or placement review hearings.

24. To expect that my records and personal information will be kept private and will be discussed *only* when it is about my care.
25. To have visitors, to keep a personal journal, to send and receive unopened mail, and to make and receive private phone calls unless appropriate professionals or a court says that restrictions are necessary for my best interests.
26. To get paid for any work done, except for routine chores or work assigned as fair and/or reasonable discipline.
27. To give my permission in writing before taking part in any publicity or fund raising activity for where I am placed or the agency, including the use of my photograph.
28. To not be forced to make public statements showing my gratitude to the Adoption home or agency.
29. To receive, refuse, or request treatment for physical, emotional, mental health, or chemical dependency needs separately from adults (other than young adults) who are receiving services.
30. To call the Texas Abuse/Neglect On call line at 1-800-252-5400 to report abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violation of personal rights without fear of punishment, interference, coercion, or retaliation.
31. To complain to the DFPS Consumer Affairs Office at **1-800-720-7777** and/or Advocacy, Inc. at 1-800- 252-9108 if I feel any of my rights have been violated or ignored. To be free from threats of punishment for making complaints and have the right to make an anonymous complaint if I choose.
32. To be told in writing of the name, address, phone number and purpose of the Texas Protection and Advocacy System for disability assistance.
33. To not get pressured to get an abortion, give up my child for adoption, or to parent my child, if applicable.
34. To hire independent mental health professionals, medical professionals, and attorneys at my own expense.
35. To understand and have a copy of the rights of children in Adoption care.

**(Child 16 and older) When I am age 16 and older in Adoption care, I also have the right:**

1. To attend Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes and activities as appropriate to my case plan.
2. To a comprehensive transition plan that includes planning for my career and help to enroll in an educational or vocational job training program.
3. To be told about educational opportunities when I leave care.
4. To get help in obtaining an independent residence when aging out.
5. To one or more Circle of Support Conferences or Transition Planning Meetings.
6. To take part in child leadership development opportunities.
7. To consent to all or some of my medical care as authorized by the court and based on my maturity level. For example, if the court authorizes, I may give consent
  - to diagnose and treat an infectious, contagious, or communicable disease
  - to examine and treat drug addiction
  - for counseling related to preventing suicide, drug addiction, or sexual, physical, or emotional abuse
  - for hospital, medical, or surgical treatment (other than abortion) related to the pregnancy if I am unmarried and pregnant

If I consent to any medical care on my own, without the court or DFPS involved, then I am legally responsible for paying for my own medical care.

8. To request a hearing from a court to determine if I have the capacity to consent to medical care (Sec 266.010).
9. To help with getting my driver's license, social security number, birth certificate, and state ID card.
10. To seek proper employment, keep my own money, and have my own bank account in my own name, depending on my case plan and age or level of maturity.
11. To get necessary personal information within 30 days of leaving care, including my birth certificate, immunization records, and information contained in my education portfolio and health passport.

### **Use of Tobacco Products/Smoking:**

1. Smoking is prohibited in the Adoption homes when a child is in placement.
2. Smoking is prohibited in vehicles when a child is present.
3. Child in Adoption care under the age of 18 are not allowed to possess, use, or purchase any type of tobacco products.

4. Tobacco products and paraphernalia are the following:

- A. Cigarettes
- B. Cigars
- C. Pipes
- D. Snuff
- E. Dip
- F. Chewing tobacco
- G. Rolling papers
- H. Matches
- I. Lighter
- J. Clips

**Responsibility for Reporting Abuse:**

The policy of Advantage Adoptions - OCOC shall be to follow the guidelines as defined by the State of Texas Family Code Section 261 for determining whether behavior is defined as abusive or neglectful.

1. Definitions extracted from Family Code Section 261:

a. "Abuse" includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

- i. Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment of the child's growth, development, or psychological function;
- ii. causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material implement in the child's growth, development, o psychological functioning;

- 2. physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to substantial risk or harm;
- 3. 1v. failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;
- 4. sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare;
- 5. failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child;
- 6. Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Section 43.01, Penal Code;

7. causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Section 43.21, Penal Code, or pornographic;
8. the current use by a person of a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child; or
9. Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code.
  - a. "Neglect" includes:
    - i. The leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child;

10. The following acts or omissions by a person:

- a. placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child;
- b. failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in a observable and material impairment to the growth development, or functioning of the child;
- c. the failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused;
- d. placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child; or
- e. the failure by the person responsible for a child's care, custody or welfare to permit the child to return to the child's home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in residential placement or having

run away.

- i. If an employee contractor, Adoption Parent, or respite provider, based upon objective facts and reasonable inferences drawn from those acts, has a reasonable suspicion that another person is in violation of this policy, then that person under reasonable suspicion will be subject to investigation.
- ii. Conviction of an employee or Adoption Parent for abuse will result in immediate termination of that employee or revocation of license as appropriate. Any employee who knowingly "looks the other way" or fails to report abuse will be terminated immediately and Adoption Parents will no longer be licensed by AA - OCOC.

### **Storage and Destruction of Medication:**

1. Medication must be stored in the original containers as received from the pharmacy.
2. Drugs requiring refrigeration must be stored within the refrigerator and shall be separated from food in a designated container with a lock.
3. Transferring between containers of medication is illegal i.e., pouring medication from a large container to a small one. Transferring medication from one patient's container (borrowing) is illegal. Adoption Parents may transfer medication from the original container to a duplicate container for administration of medication at school.
4. Discontinued or out of date medication should be turned in to the treating physician or pharmacist, for proper disposal within 30 days of expiration or discontinuation. For medications left behind by a child who has run away or otherwise left the program unannounced, the child's managing conservator shall be contacted within 10 working days and medication will be disposed of as they direct.
5. All psychotropic medications must be stored in a double locked area. For example, a locked container which is then placed in a room with a lock.
6. All non-psychotropic medications, including antibiotics, over-the-counter medications, and "for external use only" medications of all household members, are stored separately from other medications and under lock.
7. Sample medications are not allowed unless properly labeled and prescribed by the attending physician.

### **Physical Environment:**

1. The Adoption home must be comparable to other homes in the neighborhood in which it is located.

2. The Adoption home and premises must be free from objects, materials, and conditions, which constitute a danger to children.
3. The Adoption home must be inspected and approved by a representative of the local health and/or sanitation department or a designee prior to approval and annually thereafter. Inspections must cover sanitation, health, fire prevention and safety and conducted by specified personnel in accordance with city or county standards.
4. The Adoption home must have access to schools, churches, medical care, recreation and community facilities.
5. Because of the need for frequent parent/child visits, the Adoption home must be located
6. Within reasonable proximity of DFPS offices and/or designated locations where parent/child visits would occur.
7. Play Area and Equipment
8. The Adoption home must have a safe outdoor play area as part of the property or within reasonable walking distance.
9. Adoption parents must not leave young children, or children with physical impairments, unsupervised in the bathroom or bathtub.
10. Adoption parents must supervise children at all times when those children are around any large bodies of water, which includes swimming pool, hot tubs, stock ponds, creeks, rivers, and lakes.
11. When children are around any large body of water, they must wear a regulation life preserver if they cannot demonstrate that they are able to swim. Adoption Parents cannot assume the children know how to swim because they are school age and or state they know how to swim.
12. For Adoption homes and group homes, outdoor swimming pools must be enclosed by a fence. The entrance and exit doors must be locked at all times when not in use. Exit doors leading to the pool should also have alarms on them. For group homes a certified lifeguard must be on duty when the home's swimming area is in use. Children who are placed in family Adoption homes that have swimming pools must be taught how to swim and be instructed in water safety as appropriate to their age.
13. Trampolines are not allowed in any of AA - OCOC's licensed adoptive or pre-adoptive homes.
14. Interior Environment
15. The Adoptive home must have sufficient space, be comfortably furnished, and be accessible to all members of the family.
16. A bedroom must have at least 40 square feet of space for each occupant, and no more than four occupants per bedroom are permitted, even if the square footage would accommodate more than four occupants, however the four occupant restriction does not apply to children receiving treatment services for primary medical needs.
17. Single occupant bedrooms must have at least 80 square feet of floor space.
18. Each child must be provided with adequate storage space for personal belongings and a designated space for hanging clothes in or near the bedroom occupied by the child.
19. Only rooms that provide adequate opportunities for rest and privacy may be

- used as a bedroom. The following may not be used as a bedroom:
20. Room commonly used for other purposes, including dining rooms, living rooms, hallways, or porches.
  21. A passageway to other rooms.
  22. A room that does not have doors for privacy; or
  23. A detached structure.
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24. An adoptive child may use a basement as a bedroom if there is a second fire escape route from the basement and natural lighting.
  25. An adoptive parent will allow children to participate in decorating their bedrooms so that the area reflects the child's personal taste and expression.
  26. Each child will have his own bed and each infant his own crib that is age and size
  27. Appropriate and meets the Consumer Products Safety Commission Standards. In order to ensure desirable privacy, children in Adoption care will not share a bedroom with any adult. A child may share a bedroom with an adult caregiver when it is determined to be in the child's best interest, the child is under three years old and approval is documented and dated in the child's service plan by the service planning team and approved by DFPS. An exception may be made during specific travel/camping situations if there aren't other reasonable provisions as long as other requirements are met. Adoption parents should anticipate these situations and seek prior advisement from AA - OCOC staff.
  28. Any child over six years of age will not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex. Although this standard does not necessarily apply to children reared in their own homes, it is an essential safeguard for children because the nature of their early experiences may affect the development of their sexual attitudes and subsequent behavior.
    - j) The Adoption care home must be clean and free of hazards to the health and physical well-being of the family.
29. The Adoption care home must have a continuous supply of clean drinking water approved by the local health department. If the water is not from a standard city water supply, Adoption care parents must have the water tested and approved.
  30. The Adoption care home must have an adequate supply of hot water for bathing and dish washing. Hot water accessible to children must not exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit, 43 degrees Celsius, at the outlet.

**General Adoption Care Safety:**

1. All medications, poisonous chemicals, and cleaning materials must be in a locked place and inaccessible to children.
2. Alcoholic beverages should be stored out of the reach of small children. To avoid access to alcoholic beverages by older children, it is recommended that these beverages be kept in a locked place.
3. If Adoption parents own a gun, the ammunition and unloaded firearm must be kept separately in locked enclosures.

4. Pets in the Adoption care home must be vaccinated and their vaccinations must be current.
5. Adoption care parents must have a method to restrict children's access to large pets or potentially dangerous animals.
6. Transportation and access to a telephone must be immediately available for use in emergencies.
7. First aid supplies must have unexpired dates and must be stored in a place easily accessible by the Adoption care parent.
8. All sliding glass doors must have a mark to prevent children walking through glass
9. Ceiling fans must be securely mounted
10. Extension cords must be maintained in areas not accessible by children.
11. Protective covers must be on electric outlets
12. Safety locks should be on kitchen drawers and cabinets
13. Infant furnishing and equipment must minimally include crib for each infant and a sufficient number of toys in order to keep each child engaged in activities.

### **Burglar Bars:**

1. If the home is equipped with burglar bars, the caregiver must demonstrate that:
  - a. The burglar bars can break away from the inside.
  - b. The home must have all doors and windows accessible to those living in the house for exit purposes.

### **Transportation Safety:**

1. Adoption care parents must have transportation available 24 hours a day. All vehicles used to transport children must be in safe condition, in compliance with applicable motor vehicle laws of the state, and equipped with seat belts and approved car seats for children.
2. The Adoption care parent(s) must have all vehicles owned by them insured to include liability for transporting children. Insurance policies should be available for inspection by the agency at the time of approval and re-approval.
3. If Adoption care parents drive, they must have a valid driver's license. They must allow Adoption children to be transported only by persons possessing a valid driver's license.
4. The Adoption care parent(s) must not transport Adoption children in vehicles such as truck beds, motorcycles, or any other method of transportation, which would be dangerous to the child.
5. Adoption parents must not leave children unattended in a vehicle at any time.
6. Biological children of Adoption care parents are allowed to transport Adoption children if they are of driving age, have a valid Texas driver's license, a clear driving record, and are allowed to drive without a licensed driver in the car with them.

### **Appeal/Grievance Procedures:**

1. In the event that any agency client (i.e., birth parents, foster parents or adoptive parents) wishes to appeal any decision Advantage Adoptions - AA - OCOC makes regarding their involvement with the agency, the following process

should be followed:

2. Complaints from birth/foster/adoptive parents should be resolved at the lowest possible level. If not resolved at one level, then the complaint would move through the chain of command.
3. Advantage Adoptions - AA - OCOC will inform clients of their right to appeal and the appeal process and applicable time frames at time of verification/approval and/or at time of their licensure.
4. When a complaint is made to a case manager, the case manager must report the complaint to his/her supervisor and to the LCPAA to begin an investigation process. The administrative staff will work to resolve the issue by contacting the client to discuss and resolve the issues. This initial contact should be made within **7 days of receipt of complaint**. Disposition should be made at the meeting and followed up in writing to client within **2-3 days** from meeting.
5. If the birth/foster/adoptive parent is not satisfied with the outcome or response to the complaint then the parent can proceed to the next level that involves the client submitting a request in writing to CPA Administrator no later than 10 working days after receipt of decision from initial meeting.
6. The next level of the investigation process involves a Peer Review. The peer review will allow the parent to have a "peer" representation during the review. The peer review is convened by an impartial third party and participants include the birth/foster/adoptive parent and their respective peer, administrative staff, the parent's case manager/ worker and the CPA Administrator. A listing of individuals who may be utilized as third parties will be made available to the birth/foster/adoptive parents at their request. These could include psychologists, consultants, counselors or therapists, uninvolved AA - AA - OCOC staff (one not directly involved with the particular case or the decision).
7. The peer review convenes within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint by CPA Administrator. The committee will review available written materials, assess information from participants and make decisions after the client and representatives are excused from the Peer Review. The client will be notified by letter within 7 working days subsequent to the Review.
8. Should the birth/foster/adoptive parent(s) disagree with the decision, they will be informed of their right and given written directives on how to contact DFPS-RCCL at 1-800-228-8226. Any written communication should be addressed to DFPS - RCCL at 1200 E. Copeland Street, Arlington, Texas 76011.

The peer review process may be used in the following situations:

1. Closure of home
2. Removal of children from the adoptive home for reasons other than allegations of abuse and neglect or court ordered removals;
3. Lowering capacity of placements;
4. Adoptive parents placed on corrective action;
5. Staff conflicts with adoptive parents
6. Birth parents conflict with staff and/or adoptive parent
7. Birth parents complaint about child care or case plans

Birth/foster/adoptive parents that use the peer review appeal process must sign a release of information statement before any information is shared with their peers. Clients will be informed of their right to contact TDFPS to appeal the decision. The family is further advised to file a complaint against this agency by writing to:

Department of Family and Protective  
Services, Child Care Licensing

P. O. Box 149030, M.C, E-550

Austin, Texas 78714-9030

Phone: 512 438-3267, Hotline: 1-800-252-5400, Fax: 512 438-3848

Website:

<http://www.txchildcaresearch/org>