

MEPA COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

MEPA Complaint Procedure:

Any person who believes that Lucas County Children Services (LCCS), any other public or private Ohio adoption or foster care agency, or the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services has policies or procedures that violate MEPA and Title VI may file a complaint. In addition, anyone who believes that he or she was intimidated, threatened, coerced, discriminated against or otherwise retaliated against in some way because he or she made a complaint, testified, assisted or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing in connection with an allegation that the agency engaged in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices as it applies in the foster care or adoption process foster care or adoption process may also file a complaint.

Individuals who may file a complaint include but are not limited to the following:

- a foster or adoptive parent or other member of a foster or adoptive family
- a prospective foster or adoptive parent or other family member
- an employee or former employee of LCCS or of any other Ohio adoption or foster care agency

Individuals who wish to file a complaint must complete the "Discrimination Complaint Form" (JFS 02333). This complaint may be filed with any of the following:

- Lucas County Children Services
Attn: MEPA Monitor
705 Adams
Toledo, Oh 43604
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Bureau of Civil Rights
30 E. Broad Street, 37th Floor
Columbus, OH 43266-0423
- Any other public or private Ohio foster care or adoption agency

The complaint shall be filed within two years from the date of the occurrence of the alleged discriminatory act; or two years from the date upon which the complainant learned or should have known of a discriminatory act, policy or practice.

If the complaint is filed with this agency's 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 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint 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 timeframe.

ODJFS will provide a copy of the investigation report to the complainant and to the agency that is the subject of the complaint.

LCCS shall not initiate, conduct, or run concurrent investigations surrounding the complaint or take any further action regarding the complainant or the subject of the complaint until the issuance of the final investigation report by ODJFS, unless approved by ODJFS.

LCCS shall cooperate fully with ODJFS during the course of the investigation and shall submit any information requested by ODJFS no later than fourteen days from the date of the request, unless otherwise agree upon.

Prohibition on Retaliation:

LCCS employees and contractors/providers may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, discriminate against or otherwise retaliate against any individual who makes a complaint, testifies, assists or participants in any manner in an investigation related to alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in the foster care or adoption process.

Nothing in these procedures prohibits an individual from filing a complaint with the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

LCCS staff who become aware of or receive a complaint alleging violation of MEPA will immediately refer the party to the agency MEPA Monitor and provide a copy of this complaint procedure.

Attached is the LCCS Standards of Conduct, which contains permissible and prohibited actions regarding MEPA.

Provision of Complaint Procedure:

LCCS will provide a copy of the agency's "MEPA Complaint Procedure" to all individuals inquiring about or applying to be a foster caregiver or adoptive parent. The procedures will be provided within seven days of the individual's first contact with the agency.

LCCS will provide a copy of the "MEPA Complaint Procedure" to all foster caregivers certified or in the process of certification and all individuals who have approved adoptive homestudies or who are participating in the adoptive homestudy process no later than March 3, 2005.