

How does the complaint process work?

Once the College receives a written complaint, it will begin a review process. If the matter is within the jurisdiction of the College, it will be sent to the Inquiry Committee. The College's Inquiry Committee includes both psychologists and members of the public, and reviews approximately 40 - 60 complaints a year. When an investigation is commenced the Inquiry Committee will investigate the matter, and this will include giving the psychologist involved an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

To start, a registrant would be notified of a complaint against him or her – including the name of the person making the complaint - within a short timeframe of the College receiving the formal written complaint. There may be circumstances when this initial period of time is longer if, for example, the complainant has personal safety concerns or further clarification from the complainant is necessary regarding the concerns.

Once all materials have been reviewed, the Inquiry Committee has a number of options available to it. It may dismiss a matter if it determines no misconduct or incompetence occurred or if there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the complaint.

The Inquiry Committee can also accept an undertaking from or make an agreement with the psychologist to improve his or her practice, including possibly taking further education or other appropriate actions. In more serious cases, more serious action will need to be taken. If the psychologist and the Inquiry Committee can't agree to terms or actions to remedy the situation, the matter may be referred to a disciplinary hearing.

BC's *Health Professions Act* allows you to request that the Health Professions Review Board review the decision of the Inquiry Committee within 30 days of notification of the decision. The Health Professions Review Board's website is www.hprb.gov.bc.ca. This website contains information on how to request a review as well as information brochures.

What is a discipline hearing?

If the Inquiry Committee has serious concerns that remain unresolved, then a formal disciplinary hearing may be held. In many ways, it is like a trial. Complainants might be required to give evidence under oath. The hearing panel has a number of options available to it should it decide that disciplinary action is necessary. The College of Psychologists publishes information about disciplinary decisions in its annual report and on its website.

How long does the whole process take?

This will vary depending on a number of factors, including the complexity of the complaint, volume of materials to be reviewed, and the volume of complaints at the College.

Your Psychologist and You



What to do if you have a complaint

For further information about the complaint process, please review the College's website:
<http://www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca>
or write to the College at:

College of Psychologists of British Columbia
404-1755 West Broadway
Vancouver BC V6J 4S5
Tel.: (604) 736-6164 or 1 (800) 665-0979 (toll-free in BC)
Fax: (604) 736-6133

 College of Psychologists
of British Columbia

Psychologists are professionals trained to help patients through the provision of competent therapeutic and assessment services. Registered psychologists are accountable to the College of Psychologists of British Columbia.

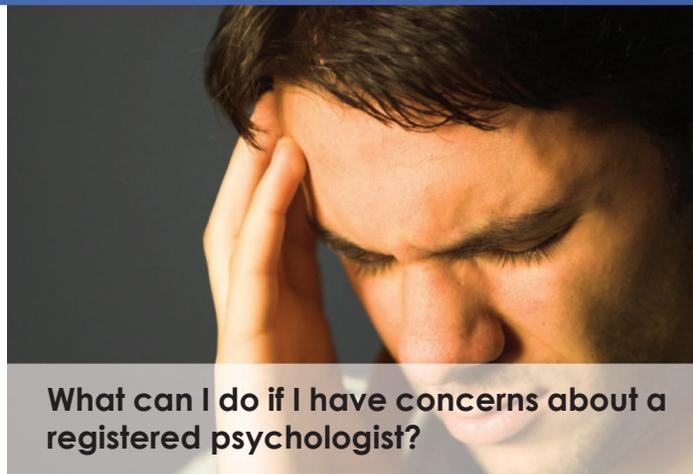
When you deal with a registered psychologist, you are entitled to competent and ethical services. Usually, that is exactly what you get. There may be times, however, when you think that professional standards are not being met. The information in this brochure is intended to help you understand how to make your concerns known to the College of Psychologists, and provides information about the formal complaint process.

How do I make the College aware of my concerns?

You may inform the College of Psychologists of your concerns by telephone or in writing. When you contact us, you can describe your concerns. During the discussion, the College's processes will be explained to you.

For some people, a brief discussion alleviates concerns and individuals may decide not to proceed with a written complaint. Concerns often arise because of misunderstandings or misinterpretations, while others are caused by genuine errors. Simple misunderstandings can often be resolved using informal resolution, but some matters require investigations and further follow-up by the College.

In the event you wish to file a formal complaint, you will need to submit a written letter of complaint. To help you communicate your concerns, the College has developed a form to assist you in explaining the nature of your complaint. This form is available by request from the College office or on the College's website at www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca under the section "Complaints".



What can I do if I have concerns about a registered psychologist?

The College of Psychologists of British Columbia is responsible for protecting the public interest by regulating psychologists. A significant aspect of protecting the public is investigating complaints related to a psychologist's practice and conduct.

Concerns about business practices and billings might better be handled by speaking with your psychologist. In fact, this is often a good first step as you attempt to resolve your concern.

It is also important to note that the College isn't able to intervene in matters that are before the courts, such as custody and access or medical compensation litigation. You should also understand that the College is not able to award financial damages as part of the complaint investigation process.

The College of Psychologists

is established under the *Health Professions Act* of BC. More information about the College, including our Bylaws, Regulation, and *Code of Conduct*, can be found on the College website.

www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca

What can I expect from my psychologist?

Registered psychologists provide a number of specialized services to help with a variety of problems. They must adhere to a large number of professional standards contained in a *Code of Conduct*. Regardless of the specific reason you are seeking their help, there are a number of things you can always expect from your psychologist including:

- ψ your psychologist provides enough information so that your decision to receive services is well-informed (this is called "informed consent");
- ψ your psychologist maintains a professional relationship with you at all times;
- ψ your psychologist practices in areas in which he or she is competent;
- ψ your psychologist keeps records of your treatment for 7 years (or more if you are under 19), and you have the right to see these records subject to some very narrow exceptions and some very specific situations;
- ψ your psychologist keeps confidential any information you share with him or her, subject to the exceptions stipulated by the *Code of Conduct* and governing legislation.

The timeframe for processing and investigating a complaint depends on a number of factors including the complexity of the issues involved and the availability and volume of documentation that must be reviewed.

The complaint process is an important part of ensuring quality and accountability in the provision of psychological services in British Columbia.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to the attention of the College.