

## 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 non-psychologists, and reviews approximately 50 complaints a year. The Committee will investigate the matter, and this will include giving the psychologist involved an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

Once all materials are 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. BC's Health Professions Act allows you to request that the Health Professions Review Board to 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](http://www.hprb.gov.bc.ca). This website contains information on how to request a review as well as information brochures.

The Inquiry Committee can also accept an undertaking from or make an agreement with the psychologist or psychological associate to improve their 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 or psychological associate and the Inquiry Committee can't agree to terms or actions to remedy the situation, the matter will be referred to a disciplinary hearing.

## What is a discipline hearing?

If the Inquiry Committee has serious concerns that remain unresolved, then a formal disciplinary hearing is 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 the 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. If the complaint goes to a disciplinary hearing, it would not be uncommon for the process to take up to 18 months or longer.

To start, a registrant would typically be notified of a complaint against them – including the name of the person making the complaint - within two weeks of the College receiving the formal written complaint. There may be circumstances when this initial period of time is longer if the complainant has personal safety concerns.

For further information about the complaint process, please contact the College's office by calling us at:  
(604) 736-6164 or 1-800-665-0979  
(toll free in British Columbia)

or by writing to us at:

College of Psychologists of British Columbia  
#404, 1755 West Broadway  
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 4S5

# Your Psychologist and You



## What to do if you have a complaint?

 College of Psychologists  
of British Columbia

**Psychologists** and psychological associates are here to help patients through the provision of competent therapeutic, and assessment services. Psychologists and psychological associates are psychology professionals accountable to the College of Psychologists of British Columbia. When you deal with a psychology professional, you are entitled to competent and ethical services.

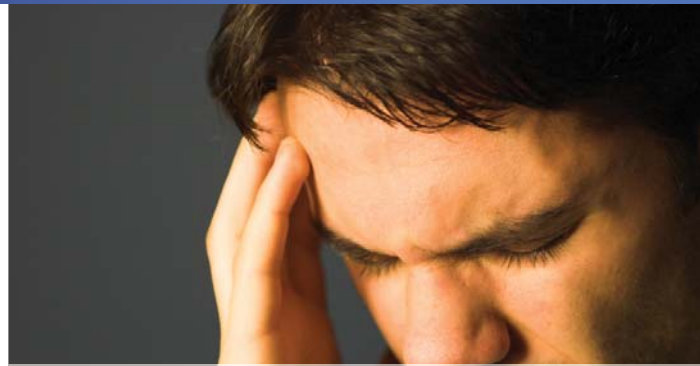
Usually, that is exactly what you get. There may be times, however, when you think that professional standards are not being met. The information in this brochure is intended to help you understand how to make your concerns known to the College of Psychologists, and provides information about the formal 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 some 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.

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](http://www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca) under the section "For the Public – Making a Complaint."



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

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

Concerns about business practices and billings might better be handled by speaking with your psychologist or psychological associate. 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.

## The College of Psychologists

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

[www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca](http://www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca)

## What can I expect from my psychologist?

Psychologists and psychological associates provide a number of specialized services to help you with a variety of problems. They must meet rigorous standards in order to practice in BC, and must adhere to a number of standards, including 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:

your psychologist provides enough information so that your decision to receive services is well-informed (this is called "informed consent")

your psychologist will maintain a professional relationship with you at all times

your psychologist will only practice in areas in which he or she is competent

your psychologist will keep 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, except for some very specific situations

your psychologist will keep confidential any information you share with him or her.

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. It is not unusual for a complaint to take between 6 and 18 months to resolve.

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.