

The College of Physicians & Surgeons is responsible for regulating physicians under the *Health Professions Act*. Included in this role of self-regulation is the obligation to investigate complaints about physicians.

The College approaches complaints about physicians as problems to be solved.

A complaint may provide the opportunity for a physician to change behavior, or to improve some aspect of practice. In some instances, when there is a question of knowledge or skill, assessment and retraining may be required. Our experience is that the best outcome happens when the physician is a willing participant in the complaint process.

Complaints often stem from misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

A significant number of complaints arise due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the doctor's actions or instructions. In such cases we try to bridge the gap. We recognize that we may not always be able to save the relationship between the patient and the physician, but we may be able to achieve acknowledgment and apology from the physician.

What you can expect to happen after filing a complaint.

In all cases, we will clarify the issues put forward in a formal complaint and attempt to address them. We will also ask what outcome the complainant desires or expects.

We always hope the outcome of a complaint meets the expectations of the complainant. However, we recognize that this may not always be possible.

Our goal is to have competent physicians practicing safe medicine for the benefit of the public of Alberta.

When a physician acknowledges a transgression and is willing to consider a behavioral change, assessment, medical treatment or retraining; we prefer to work with the physician to identify the problem and to work towards a solution. We believe that the chances of long-term success with this approach are much higher than if disciplinary action is taken - action that may, in fact, be counter-productive to creating a positive change in physician behavior.

The College may pursue formal disciplinary action against a physician when there is evidence of a very serious offense and the physician has not acknowledged the transgression, or when the physician is a repeat offender and has failed to act on our direction regarding retraining or behavioral change.

In all circumstances where we have identified a problem, the College takes steps to ensure that the problem will not occur again.