

Complaints Process

Introduction

The College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (the CDHO) is the regulatory body for dental hygienists in Ontario. The Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) of the College is required to deal with all complaints submitted to the College.

You Have the Right to Complain

If you have a concern about a dental hygienist, you have the right to complain to the CDHO. Although there is no time limit in which to make your complaint, you should let the CDHO know about your concern as soon as possible.

Telling Us About Your Complaint

If you have a complaint about a dental hygienist, send your complaint to the CDHO in a recorded format – for example, written, tape or video recorded.

The more information you can give, the easier it will be to look into your complaint. You should include:

- the name of the dental hygienist involved (if known);
- the date the incident occurred;
- the time the incident occurred;
- where the incident occurred (e.g., name of the dental/dental hygiene practice);
- your name, address and phone number;
- as many details as possible about the incident; and
- the names and addresses of anyone else that may be able to give information about your complaint.

If you want to make a complaint but are having trouble putting your thoughts in a letter, you can call the CDHO for assistance in recording your complaint.

Investigating Your Complaint

Once the College has received your complaint, an investigation will begin. In most cases, a copy of your complaint will be forwarded to the dental hygienist, who will be given 30 days to respond to your concern. A copy of the dental hygienist's response will then be sent to you for any further comments you may wish to make. The dental hygienist's explanation may be enough to answer any questions you have and may resolve your complaint.

If the dental hygienist's response has not resolved your complaint, the ICRC will continue with its investigation. In some cases, the College may ask you to sign an Authorization Form to assist in obtaining your oral health records. Even if you are satisfied with the dental hygienist's response, the ICRC may choose to continue its investigation if it feels that it is in the public interest to do so. The College will keep you informed as the investigation proceeds.

The ICRC includes both members of the public and dental hygienists. Neither you nor the dental hygienist attends the ICRC meetings. The ICRC may decide to appoint an investigator to gather information relating to your complaint. This may involve interviewing you, the dental hygienist, and any other person who may have information relating to your complaint. All information relating to the investigation and resolution of a complaint is confidential.

What Happens Next?

The ICRC reviews everything gathered during the investigation. After this review, the ICRC may do one or more of the following:

- Require the dental hygienist to appear before the ICRC to be cautioned.
- Require the dental hygienist to complete a specified continuing education or remediation program.
- Refer the matter for incapacity proceedings if there are concerns suggesting that the dental hygienist is suffering from a physical or mental incapacity.
- Refer the matter to the Discipline Committee. The discipline process is entirely separate from the complaints process. The Discipline Committee deals with allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence through a formal hearing. The College prosecutes the dental hygienist against whom the allegations have been made. As the complainant, you are not a party to these proceedings. However, you may be called to appear as a witness.
- Take no further action.
- Take other action it considers appropriate and which is not inconsistent with the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA)*, part of which outlines the complaint process for all regulated health professionals.

Written reasons will be provided to both you and the dental hygienist where the matter has not been referred to the Discipline Committee or for incapacity proceedings.

Timeframes

The investigation of a complaint should be completed within 150 days of it being filed with the College. If it takes more than 150 days to conclude the matter, the ICRC does not lose jurisdiction. A letter is sent to the complainant explaining that the ICRC will not meet the deadline and providing an expected date of disposition that is no more than 60 days from the date of the notice. After 210 days, if the matter is still not concluded, a letter is sent to both parties and to the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB) explaining why the ICRC was not able to do so and an estimate of the expected date of disposition. Either party can bring an application to HPARB seeking relief from the delay of the investigation. What happens if I am not satisfied with the decision of the ICRC?

Unless the decision is a referral to the Discipline Committee or for incapacity proceedings, both you and the dental hygienist have the right to request a review of the decision by the [Health Professions Appeal and Review Board](#) within 30 days of receipt of the ICRC's decision. The Board is an independent body established by the provincial government. It is made up of non-health care professionals.

The College does not have the authority to order monetary compensation for you from the dental hygienist. This can only be achieved through civil proceedings.

How to Contact the College

Your letter of complaint should be addressed to:

The College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario
69 Bloor Street East, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 1A9

Tel: 416-961-6234, ext. 228
Toll Free: 1-800-268-2346, ext. 228
Fax: 416-961-6028
E-mail: ewaters@cdho.org