



# The Complaints Process

By: Lloyd Fischer, Complaints Director



Anyone who has a concern about a dental hygienist may make a complaint to the College.

**This article outlines the process for a complaint once it has been submitted.**

As a regulator, the College has a role to protect the public from “unprofessional conduct” and hold registrants of the profession accountable for the care they provide. Once the College has received a complaint, it will be dealt with in accordance with the processes set out in the Health Professions Act. There are several different outcomes once a complaint has been received by the Complaints Director.

After receiving a complaint, the Complaints Director may:

- Encourage the complainant and the investigated person to communicate with each other and resolve the complaint
- Attempt to resolve the complaint, with the consent of both parties
- Refer the complaint to an alternative complaint resolution process
- Ask an expert to assess the subject matter of the complaint and provide a written report
- Conduct or appoint an investigator to conduct an investigation
- Dismiss the complaint

If the Complaints Director launches an investigation, both the complainant and the person being investigated will usually be provided with information about the complaint. Once the investigation is complete, the complaint may be dismissed or it may go to the Hearing Tribunal. If the Hearing Tribunal finds that there has been unprofessional conduct, it can do one of more of the following:

- Caution or reprimand the investigated person
- Impose conditions on the investigated person’s practice permit
- Require the investigated person to satisfy the Hearing Tribunal that they are not incapacitated
- Require counselling or a treatment program
- Require a course of study
- Suspend or cancel the investigated person’s practice permit
- Impose fines
- Make any other appropriate order



Although there is no way for a Registered Dental Hygienist to guarantee that they will never have a complaint filed against them, the best way to minimize risk is to use the highest possible standards of practice at all times. This includes meeting or exceeding practice standards and guidelines, following all applicable treatment protocols, following the Code of Ethics and using the highest standards of client care.

Additionally, one of the most important elements in a relationship with clients is effective communication. RDHs should listen carefully to understand what their clients hope to gain from their treatment. Ensure that clients understand their treatment plan, including the treatment being proposed, what results can be reasonably expected, potential risks or complications, and the fees that will be charged.

If a client raises a concern, an RDH should address it immediately. A formal complaint may be avoided if the client feels that his or her concern has been dealt with respectfully and honestly. In some cases, however, a formal complaint may still result, so it is important to keep careful notes of any concerns that are raised.

For a visual representation of the how the complaints process typically works, see this [process flowchart](#).

If you have questions about the complaints process, please contact me at any time. I can be reached via email at [complaints@crdha.ca](mailto:complaints@crdha.ca) or by calling the College at (780) 465-1756.