



Complaints Intake and Assessment Policy and Guidelines

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Glossary and Definitions

The following terms are used throughout the policy:

Complaint Assessment is the process by which the Oversight Office ensures a complaint submission is complete and falls within its scope of authority.

Complaint Review is one of the Oversight Office's oversight processes respecting the performance of a regulatory college or colleges in B.C.

Complaint Dismissal is a decision made by the Superintendent of the Oversight Office that a complaint is out of scope or not actionable. Complaint Dismissals are done through a legal order and contain a rationale for the dismissal.

Complaint Transfer is a decision made by the Superintendent of the Oversight Office that the complaint is out of scope but may fit within the jurisdiction of another organization, so may be transferred with written consent from the complainant.

Conduct includes issues related to behavior, attitude and compliance with laws, organizational standards, and policies.

Disposition refers to the outcome of a complaint submission determined by the Oversight Office's assessment.

Investigation is one of the Oversight Office's oversight processes respecting the conduct of a regulatory college or colleges in B.C. as they engage in governance.

Oversight Process when dealing with complaints refers to either an audit, complaint review, an investigation or a systemic review as outlined in section 457 of the Act.

Oversight Report is a report prepared after conducting any of the oversight processes. An oversight report is shared with the complainant if initiated by a complaint.

Performance includes the quality, quantity, and efficiency of work done, and the ability to meet organizational standards.

Regulatory College refers to any of B.C.'s six health professional regulatory colleges: the B.C. College of Nurses and Midwives, the B.C. College of Oral Health Professionals, the College of Complementary Health Professionals of B.C., the College of Health and Care Professionals of B.C., the College of Pharmacists of B.C., and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C.¹.

Systemic Review is one of the Oversight Office's oversight processes that looks for broader patterns or recurring issues, including across multiple regulatory colleges.

Trauma-Informed practice is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. It emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment².

Triage of complaints is the process of assessing a complaint to determine the appropriate disposition.

¹ [About BC's Health System – Colleges, Boards and Commissions](#)

² [BC Government Trauma-Informed Practice Resources](#)

Introduction

The Health Professions and Occupations Regulatory Oversight Office (the Oversight Office) is an independent office of government. One of the roles of the Oversight Office is to evaluate the province's health professional regulatory colleges (regulatory colleges) through audits, reviews and investigations called oversight processes. In addition, the Oversight Office has oversight of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act* (the Act) and its regulations.

Oversight processes can be initiated by:

- a complaint from a person to the Oversight Office,
- on the Oversight Office's own initiative through information it has gathered, or
- at the direction of the Minister of Health (the Minister).

The Oversight Office accepts complaints from anybody about the Act and its regulations, and about the performance and/or conduct of British Columbia's (B.C.'s) health regulatory colleges.

The lands known today as B.C. have been populated by Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. They are home to more than 200 First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous communities. The Oversight Office recognizes the caretakers of these lands and honour their long tradition of supporting the health and safety of their peoples. The work of the Oversight Office is guided by the Act's Guiding Principles (sections 14 and 15), which speak to reconciliation and anti-discrimination.

Complaint Process Authority

The *Health Professions and Occupations Act* is the primary legislation governing health professional regulatory colleges in B.C. The Superintendent of the Oversight Office has authority under the Act to receive and address complaints and carry out oversight processes.

When a person contacts the Oversight Office with a complaint they are trusting us with their personal information. Personal information collected under this policy is collected under sections 26 (a), (c) and (e) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* for the purpose of assessing an external complaint received by any means. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information under this policy, please contact the Director of Complaints and Investigations by email at info@hporoo.ca, by toll free telephone number at (236) 475-3059, or by mail at PO Box 9639 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC V8W 9P1.

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the Oversight Office provides a fair, effective, trauma-informed and transparent response to all complaints and concerns raised to them. It establishes clear conditions to determine whether a complaint is under the Oversight Office's mandated jurisdiction and sets out guidelines for receiving, screening, and assessing complaints. The public is the audience of this policy.

Policy Statement

The Oversight Office is committed to ensuring that only complaints that fall within its defined scope of authority will be deemed eligible and proceed to an assessment. All complaints received will be pre-screened for completeness and clarity, assessed for jurisdictional scope and assigned to the most appropriate pathway or disposition.

The Oversight Office recognizes the disproportionate harms experienced by Indigenous Peoples in B.C. and works to support the elimination of Indigenous- specific racism through its policies and procedures.

Scope

This policy applies to the intake and assessment of a complaint. The Oversight Office accepts complaints about the Act, its regulations, and about the performance and/or conduct of B.C.'s health professional regulatory colleges.

- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia
- The British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives
- The College of Pharmacists of British Columbia
- The British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals
- The College of Complementary Health Professionals of British Columbia
- The College of Health and Care Professionals of British Columbia

Please contact the relevant regulatory college directly for concerns related to individual regulated health practitioners.

Following assessment, a complaint may be dismissed and closed, or it may provide the Oversight Office with information it believes should be the subject of an oversight process. Policy relating to the Oversight Office's responsibilities for oversight processes is outlined in its Oversight Process Policy.

Policy Guiding Principles

- **Fair:** All complaints are handled in a manner that is timely and impartial. The Oversight Office provides the opportunity for people to submit relevant information and provide additional input prior to any final decisions.
- **Transparent:** The Oversight Office's complaints process is publicly available on its website. Persons who have submitted a complaint are informed of the process and the range of potential outcomes. Following a complaint assessment if a decision is made to dismiss the complaint, rationale for that dismissal will be provided to the complainant. The Oversight Office aims to confirm receipt of a potential complaint within 5 business days and is committed to keeping people informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint assessment.
- **Person-Focused and Accessible:** The Oversight Office recognizes that people have different needs, and each person has their own unique history that they bring to any interactions. The Oversight Office commits to listening to people's concerns and treating them with dignity and respect throughout the complaints process. To allow for accessibility the Oversight Office provides multiple intake options for a person to submit a complaint.

Part 1 – Complaint Intake and Pre-Screening

1.1 COMPLAINT INTAKE

The Oversight Office receives complaints via web form, mail, telephone or in person. If a person requires assistance or accommodation to submit their complaint the Oversight Office can provide support. A person will receive written notification that their complaint has been received and outline the next steps in the process.

1.2 PRE-SCREENING

A potential complaint received by the Oversight Office will be pre-screened to confirm:

- **Completeness:** All the required information as indicated on the complaint intake form has been received. At a minimum, does the Oversight Office have a name and contact information to allow for communication with the complainant.
- **Clarity:** Has sufficient information been provided for the Oversight Office to understand and evaluate the issue raised.

Although not all fields on the complaint intake form are mandatory, there must be sufficient information provided for the Oversight Office to proceed with an assessment and to

demonstrate that a complaint falls within its jurisdiction. If there is insufficient information and providing that contact details of the complainant have been received, the Oversight Office will follow-up to clarify or collect any additional information required.

Insufficient information on the complaint intake form may limit the Oversight Office's ability to look into a complaint or to communicate a decision and outcome. If it is determined during pre-screening that the submission is not a complete complaint or is not a complaint but is a request for information or an enquiry, then it may be possible at this stage to redirect the person to another organisation.

Part 2 – Assessment of a Complaint

2.1 ASSESSMENT CONDITIONS

If the information provided passes the pre-screening phase the complaint will be assessed according to the following conditions to determine its outcome:

- **Subject of Complaint:** The complaint concerns either:
 - the actions or inactions of the performance and/or conduct of one or more of B.C.'s regulatory colleges, or
 - the Act or its regulations.
- **Jurisdiction:** The regulatory college or colleges that may be the subject of a complaint are governed by the Act and fall within the oversight authority of the Oversight Office.

Depending on the nature of a complainant's concern, the Oversight Office may need to reach out to a regulatory college to collect other information as the complaint is assessed.

2.2 COMPLAINT PRIORITIZATION

A complaint is assigned a priority level. Each complaint is unique, and because complaints received by the Oversight Office may raise issues that are urgent, sensitive, or related to risk of harm to the public, early prioritization of complaints may be required.

2.3 OUT-OF-SCOPE COMPLAINTS

A complaint is out of scope for the Oversight Office if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- the complaint relates to a matter which the Oversight Office has already produced an oversight report;
- the complaint is not about a B.C. regulatory college or the Act or its regulations;
- the complaint makes allegations that, in the opinion of the Superintendent, does not indicate a deficiency in a regulatory college's performance and or conduct;
- the complaint is about a specific regulated health practitioner and should be handled by the appropriate regulatory college;
- the complaint is within the jurisdiction of Health Professions and Occupations Regulatory Oversight Office Discipline Tribunal or the Health Professions Review Board;
- the complaint is seeking a review of an order or decision made, or an action taken or not taken, with respect to a particular person (this is not another appeal);
- in the Oversight Office's opinion, the complaint is trivial, frivolous, vexatious, an abuse of process or made in bad faith. This includes complaints made that lack any legal or evidential basis; complaints that are not serious or reasonably purposeful; complaints that are intended to harass or annoy; or complaints that are made with an ulterior motive, such as personal animosity, or with a lack of honesty such as through withholding information.

There may be other organizations in B.C. that are able to help with a complaint which is out-of-scope for this Oversight Office. Please see section 3.3 of this policy, Complaint Dismissal with a Transfer, for information on referring a complaint.

Part 3 – Triage and Disposition of a Complaint

3.1 TRIAGE OUTCOMES

Following assessment, a complaint may be dismissed, or it may provide the Oversight Office with information it believes should be the subject of an oversight process:

- **Dismissal:** If the complaint is out of scope for one or more of the reasons described in section 2.3.
- **Dismissal and Transfer:** Following dismissal it may be possible to transfer or redirect a complaint to another organisation. A transfer requires written consent for the transfer of information from the complainant.
- **Subject of an Oversight Process:** A complaint may provide the Oversight Office with information it believes should be the subject of an oversight process being an Audit, Complaint Review, Investigation or Systemic Review. Upon completion of an oversight process the Oversight Office will prepare a report summarizing any

findings, actions taken, and recommendations. This report will be distributed to the regulatory college or colleges subject to the oversight process, the complainant (if applicable), and any other partners or interested parties that the Superintendent deems appropriate.

3.2 COMPLAINT DISMISSAL

A complaint may be dismissed by order from the Superintendent for one or more reasons noted in section 2.2. Prior to sending the order, the Oversight Office will notify the complainant that dismissal is the outcome of the complaint assessment and provide the person with an opportunity to respond to the information found and/or to submit further information. If additional information is provided, the Oversight Office will consider it, determine if the assessment outcome should change and advise the person of the final decision.

If dismissed the complainant will be provided with written notice and reasons for the dismissal. The Superintendent may also provide a copy of the dismissal order to the Minister. If the decision to dismiss is because an oversight report has already been prepared the complainant will be provided with a copy of all relevant oversight reports.

3.3 COMPLAINT DISMISSAL WITH TRANSFER

A complaint can be transferred to another organisation if:

- It has first been dismissed by order for one or more of the reasons outlined in section 2.3; and
- the person who made the complaint provides written consent to the transfer of their information.

If a transfer opportunity is not available (for example the receiving organization may not have systems in place to allow for a document transfer), following dismissal of a complaint the Oversight Office may be able to provide the complainant with details and contact information about other resources or organizations that may be able to address their concern.

3.4 SUBJECT OF AN OVERSIGHT PROCESS

After assessment, if a complaint is not dismissed, one of the below oversight processes may be considered by the Oversight Office:

- **Audit** – if the complaint is about the compliance of/or ability of a regulatory college to meet published performance standards of the Oversight Office.

- **Complaint Review** – if the complaint is about the performance of a B.C. regulatory college.
- **Investigation** – if the complaint is about the conduct of a B.C. regulatory college.
- **Systemic Review** – if the complaint is about the overall regulatory performance of one or more of the regulatory colleges, and the regulation of, or the state of practice of, one or more health professions or health occupations, whether designated or not.

For more information on oversight processes please see the Oversight Processes Policy.

Related Policies

Oversight Processes Policy

Responsibilities

- **Complainants** are responsible for providing clear, sufficient and accurate information with respect to their complaint submission. The Oversight Office requires that complainants provide their name and contact information so written notification of receipt of a complaint and its outcome can be provided, as well as seek any additional information that may be needed to fully assess the concern. The Oversight Office also requires that complainants provide the subject and description of the concern at the intake stage to ensure it falls within its scope of authority. These fields are marked as mandatory on the Oversight Office's complaint intake form.
- **Office Staff** are responsible for pre-screening complaint intake submissions, assessing potential complaints against this policy, recommending triage outcomes, and logging and documenting information and decisions in the Oversight Office's case management system.
- **Superintendent** is informed of all complaint submissions and makes the final decision on all dispositions and pathways.

Documentation and Reporting

- All complaint intake information, pre-screening, assessment, and triage decisions are documented in the Oversight Office's case management system.

- If a complaint provides the Oversight Office with information it believes should be the subject of an oversight process, then a **summary** of the complaint will be shared with the respective regulatory college or colleges. The Oversight Office will not share any personal information detailed in a complaint unless permission to do this has been granted by the complainant.
- Summary data on complaint assessment and triage outcomes will be reported yearly in the Oversight Office’s annual report for quality assurance and public accountability.

Concluding Statement

The Oversight Office is committed to continuous improvement of its policies and processes, and welcomes thoughts, feedback, or questions which can be directed to the Oversight Office by contacting info@hporoo.ca.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Policy?

The Policy is intended to support a clear understanding of the Oversight Office’s complaint process. What makes a complaint eligible, whether it is within the Oversight Office’s mandated scope, the steps taken when assessing and triaging, and how the complaint is to be appropriately handled.

Who should I contact for assistance?

Please contact the Health Professions and Occupations Regulatory Oversight Office at info@hporoo.ca with the subject line “Policy Name – Support”.

I see areas where this policy can be improved. Who do I contact for suggestions?

To ask questions or provide feedback on the policy, please contact info@hporoo.ca, with the subject line “Policy Name – Suggestions”.

Version Control

Version	Date	Updates
1.0	April 1, 2026	Initial release of document