

nedic

National Eating Disorder Information Centre

[www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)

# FILING A COMPLAINT ABOUT A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER In British Columbia

When seeking support for an eating disorder, you deserve to receive care that is appropriate, safe, and professional. If you have a concern about a healthcare provider with whom you have worked or are currently working, it is your right to make a complaint.

There are many different healthcare professionals from whom you may receive support during recovery. Some may be **regulated health professionals**, meaning that they are accountable to one of British Columbia's many regulatory colleges. While some regulated health professionals work in **hospital-based programs**, others deliver their services through community agencies or private clinics.

There are also individuals providing eating disorder care who are **unregulated**. For example, in British Columbia, "recovery coach", "nutritionist", "therapist" or "counsellor" are not regulated titles or professions, and individuals practising these professions are not accountable to a specific regulatory college.

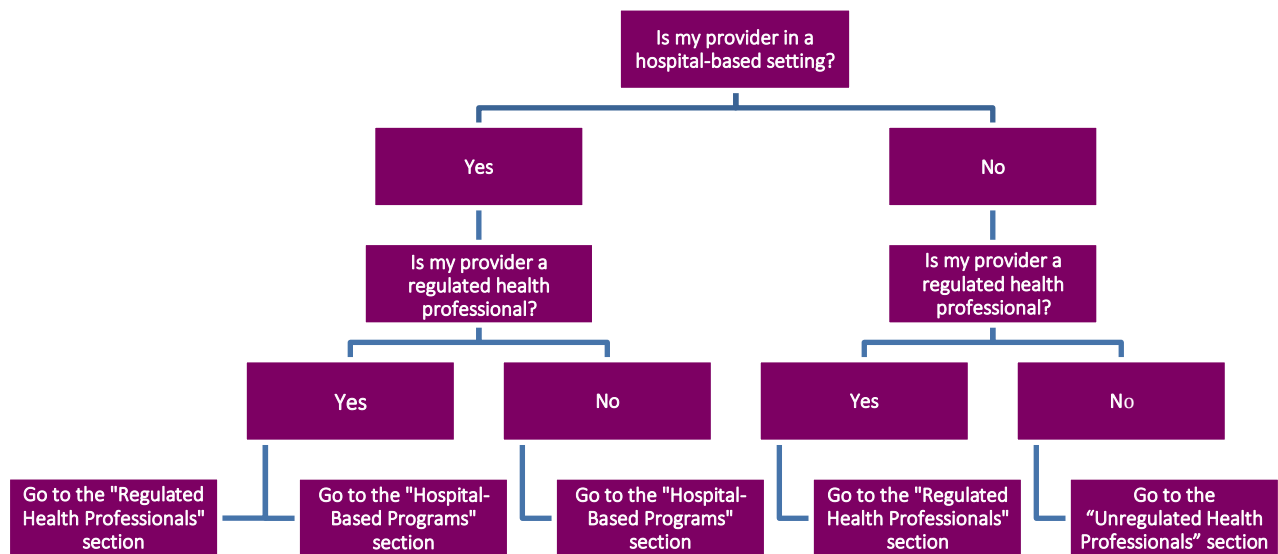
Please note that some regulated professionals may choose to use an unregulated title alongside their regulated one. For example, a social worker may also refer to themselves as a counsellor because it better describes their role to the public. If you are uncertain whether a healthcare provider is regulated, you have the right to ask if they are registered with a regulatory college.

## Should I Make a Complaint?

Any eating disorder care provider, regardless of whether or not they are a regulated health professional, should be committed to practising ethically. An ethical care provider prioritizes clients'/patients' safety and strives to avoid causing harm. Some examples of issues that warrant concern are discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviours (e.g., racism, ableism, transphobia, etc.), boundary violations (e.g., inappropriate touch, sexual harassment, sexual assault, etc.), and exploitative fee practices.

## How Do I File a Complaint?

Because there are different steps to follow depending on whether your care provider is a regulated health professional, the chart below can help you determine which section of this guide to consult for further information and next steps.



## REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

### Public Registers

Every health professional regulatory college (“college”) is required to maintain a registry of all licensed professionals. If you are receiving services from a regulated health professional, you can use their professional designation to determine which college they belong to, and then search that college’s public register for their name or licence number to review details about their registration. For example, you can learn when they first registered with that college, whether they have any Terms, Conditions, and Limitations (TCLs) on their registration (e.g., if they are required to practise under clinical supervision), and whether they have previously been directed to undergo remedial activities as the result of a disciplinary decision, etc.

Below, you can read more about the professional designations for each British Columbia college\*. Click on the name of a college to find its corresponding public register:

College	Regulated Title(s)	Other Commonly Used Titles
<a href="#">British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP)</a>	Dental Hygienist Dentist Dental Surgeon	
<a href="#">College of Dietitians of British Columbia (CDBC)</a>	Registered Dietitian (RD) Dietitian	
<a href="#">College of Naturopathic Physicians of British Columbia (CNPBC)</a>	Naturopathic Physician Naturopathic Doctor (ND) Naturopath	

<a href="#">British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM)</a>	Nurse Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Registered Nurse (RN) Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN) Nurse Practitioner (NP)	
<a href="#">College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC)</a>	Occupational Therapist (OT)	
<a href="#">College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (CPSBC)</a>	Physician Surgeon Psychiatrist	Doctor Medical Doctor
<a href="#">College of Psychologists of British Columbia</a>	Psychologist	
<a href="#">British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)</a>	Registered Social Worker (RSW) Social Worker	

\*Please note that this table includes only the most common providers serving the eating disorders community and their corresponding regulatory bodies and does not constitute a complete list of all regulators in British Columbia. For more information, please consult the [British Columbia Health Regulators](#).

## Filing a Complaint with a College

Under the *Health Professions Act*, it is the responsibility of each college to protect the public from unprofessional conduct and hold the registrants of its profession accountable for the care they provide. If you have concerns about a regulated health professional, you may wish to file a complaint with their corresponding college. To do so, you must submit a detailed written account of your concerns and give consent to access your clinical file for the purposes of investigation.

Upon receiving a complaint, the college initiates a formal process, adhering to all necessary steps. After reviewing the complaint, the college contacts both the complainant and the healthcare professional under investigation to discuss the details. During this process, the complainant's name and statement are shared with the professional to allow them an opportunity to respond. The college listens impartially to both sides and may conduct a formal investigation if deemed necessary. The timeline for this process varies depending on the complexity of the complaint, however, the complainant is kept informed about the complaint's progress and receives a written decision regarding its resolution. If dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant can appeal the college's decision within 30 days with the [Health Professions Review Board \(BCHPRB\)](#).

## Resource List

British Columbia College of Oral Health Professionals (BCCOHP)

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

## [Complaints](#)

### **College of Dietitians of British Columbia (CDBC)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **College of Naturopathic Physicians of British Columbia (CNPBC)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (CPSBC)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **College of Psychologists of British Columbia**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

### **British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW)**

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints](#)

## **HOSPITAL-BASED PROGRAMS**

In a hospital-based program, you may receive care from both regulated and unregulated providers. If you have concerns about a hospital program itself or providers within a hospital setting, start by addressing your concern(s) with the program's manager. They may be able to facilitate discussion between the involved parties and offer a resolution. If you do not reach a satisfactory outcome, you can escalate your concern with the Patient Quality Care Office at the hospital. In British Columbia, all

hospitals have a patient quality care process in place. It is a legal requirement that ensures that there is a mechanism for patients, their families, and the public to confidentially voice concerns about their experience or the care they received. This feedback helps hospitals track patient experiences and identify opportunities for quality improvement. Patient quality care teams are responsible for responding to patient inquiries, addressing complaints, and working with patients and families to ensure their needs are met during their hospital stay.

Contact information for the Patient Quality Care Office and instructions on how to make a complaint can typically be found on the hospital's website. You are not required to provide consent for the Patient Quality Care Office to access your personal health information to make a complaint. If the Patient Quality Care Office is unable to bring forward a resolution, or you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may wish to file a complaint with the [Patient Care Quality Review Board](#) for an independent review of the process regarding care quality complaints. However, to do so you are required to provide consent for the Review Board to access your personal health information, which may include anything from your name to medical history. Your information may be used by the Review Board to contact you, bring forward a satisfactory resolution or conduct an investigation if deemed necessary.

If you have concerns about the hospital-based program itself and are not satisfied with the resolutions offered by the Patient Quality Care Office, you may wish to also file a complaint with the [Office of the Ombudsperson](#). In order to do so, you are required to provide consent to access your personal health information. The Ombudsperson may share your personal information for the purpose of facilitating a resolution or investigating the complaint, however, they will never do so without your permission.

**Note:** For regulated providers working within a hospital-based setting, it is not within the scope of the Office of the Ombudsperson to investigate as there is other recourse (i.e., the provider's regulatory college) for making a complaint. If you have concerns about an individual regulated provider within a hospital (rather than the entire program itself), it would be most prudent to be in touch with both Patient Relations at the hospital *and* the provider's regulatory college.

An example of the Patient Quality Care Office process at the Vancouver Coastal Health hospitals can be found at the following link: <https://www.vch.ca/en/about-us/contact-us/compliments-complaints/patient-care-quality-office>

## UNREGULATED CARE PROVIDERS

The term "unregulated" does not mean poor service or low standards. However, in the absence of regulation, anyone can claim to be qualified to provide the services being offered without having to demonstrate a certain level of knowledge, skill, and competence. Without a regulatory college responsible for investigating complaints or reports about these providers, it is more difficult to have concerns about such services addressed.

If the unregulated provider you have concerns about is working within an institutional setting, (e.g., a hospital-based program or a community agency or service) your best option is likely to address the concerns with that institution. If, however, an unregulated provider is operating through a British

Columbia business, you can file a consumer complaint. Please consult the following BC Consumer Protection webpage for more details: <https://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/complaint-assistant/>

**Be aware that it is illegal for a care provider to represent themselves as a regulated professional if they are not registered with the relevant college.** If a provider falsely claims to be regulated, you may in fact file a report or complaint with the corresponding college. For example, if you have concerns about a “Social Worker” providing you with psychotherapy but whose name does not appear on BCCSW’s Public Register, you could contact BCCSW to discuss your concerns.

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