



This translation is provided to give you an overview of CDSBC's mandate and complaints process. Please be advised that CDSBC's day-to-day operations are carried out in English and written communications about a complaint file will be provided to you in English.

How does CDSBC protect the public?

The College of Dental Surgeons of British Columbia (CDSBC) is the regulatory body for dentists, dental therapists and certified dental assistants (CDAs) in B.C. Our core function is to protect the public by overseeing the conduct and competence of dentists, dental therapists and CDAs (our “registrants”).

CDSBC protects the public by ensuring that our registrants are registered and qualified to practise, and that they are consistently providing safe and ethical care to their patients. You can check that a dental professional is registered with us on our website's [Registrant Lookup](#).

CDSBC also responds to complaints from patients, and takes action when a registrant is practising incompetently, unethically, illegally or is impaired by alcohol, drugs or a mental illness.

Complaint Process Overview

You have a right to expect a professional standard of care. If you are dissatisfied with the care you have received or have related concerns, you may find it helpful to request an explanation from your dentist, dental therapist, or CDA before you submit a formal complaint.

Some complainants contact us seeking a resolution that we cannot provide. Because CDSBC cannot address concerns that are outside of our legal power, our investigation outcome may not address every aspect of the complaint you submit.

✓ What CDSBC can investigate

CDSBC investigates all complaints about the conduct or competence of its registrants. Our mandate is to serve and protect the public and to act at all times in the public interest.

Under the [Health Professions Act](#), CDSBC has legal powers to investigate any complaint we receive about our registrants and to address concerns that present a risk to the public. These powers include the ability to reprimand a registrant, suspend, or cancel or place limits on a registrant's registration, and impose other sanctions.

If the investigation raises concerns about a registrant's practice, CDSBC can take a remedial and collaborative approach to resolving those concerns. In all cases, protection of the public is our first priority.



✘ What CDSBC cannot do

Before you begin, please note that CDSBC is **not** able to:

- Pay money to a complainant
- Order a registrant to give a refund or pay any amount of money to a patient or another registrant, i.e., become involved in a fee dispute or award damages
- Order a dentist to provide a certain treatment to a patient
- Provide dental advice or dental treatment, or refer complainants to a new registrant
- Give legal advice or help in a lawsuit against a registrant*
- Address business disputes

**If you think you have been harmed through treatment provided by a dentist, dental therapist or CDA and you are seeking compensation CDSBC recommends also speaking with a lawyer. Such claims are resolved through the legal process, not CDSBC's complaint process.*

Submit a Complaint

Formal complaints *must* be in writing. Note that CDSBC does not accept verbal, anonymous, or unsigned complaints. Submit your signed complaint using our [online complaint submission](#), our [Complaint Form](#) (PDF), in writing by email to complaints@cdsbc.org or by mail to:

College of Dental Surgeons of BC
Complaints
500 - 1765 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6J 5C6

If submitting by email or mail, be sure to include:

- your full name and complete contact information (address, phone number and email)
- name and address of the dentist/dental therapist/CDA you wish to complain about
- name and address of any other dentists you have seen or consulted
- detailed description of the facts leading to your complaint
- any dental records you may have in your possession
- your signature



Note that your complaint letter will be provided to the registrant for their response. In most cases, you will also see the response that they provide to your complaint.

Complaints Process: Public FAQ

If you still have questions about CDSBC's complaints process after reading these frequently asked questions, please contact CDSBC's complaints team at 604-736-3621.

1. What should I do if I have a concern about my dentist/dental therapist/CDA?

The first thing to do if you have a concern is to [talk to your dentist/dental therapist/CDA](#), or if the concern is fee-related, contact the [BCDA](#). If you still have concerns, you can contact CDSBC for more information or [submit a written complaint](#).

2. Can I talk to someone about my concerns before I file a complaint?

You may contact CDSBC with questions about the complaints process by phone or email; however, complaints are not accepted by telephone or unsigned email, and CDSBC staff are not able to provide you with treatment advice.

3. How do I make a complaint?

If discussions with the registrant have not resolved your concern, you can submit a formal complaint in writing to CDSBC using our complaint form. [Learn how to submit a complaint](#).

4. Can I make a complaint on behalf of someone else?

If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, you must provide that person's written consent to the investigation and release of their confidential patient information (as it pertains to the complaint). That person should also sign the complaint letter. In the complaint, you will need to clearly state your relationship to the patient. If you are a parent making a complaint on behalf of a child who is a minor, or the representative of an adult with disabilities, patient consent is not required; however, we may require a copy of the representation agreement or order.

5. How do I access a copy of my dental records?

Every patient has the right to access a full copy of their records. Patients own the information contained in their patient chart and have the right by law to access a copy of their complete dental record. Dentists are obligated by law to provide copies of what the patient has requested, including radiographs, study models and photographs. Dental offices may charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of duplicating the records.



Dentists are not allowed to withhold a patient's records when the patient owes money for dental work. Fee disputes or other disagreements between the patient and dentist are not grounds to withhold access to, or transfer of, patient records. Dentists must also provide the patient records if another dental office requests them.

6. How long will it take for my complaint to be resolved?

Because of CDSBC's workload and the complexity of many complaints, it is difficult to accurately predict how long a complaint investigation will take. Currently the average complaint is processed in approximately 12 months, but this varies depending on the complexity of the complaint and CDSBC's available resources. In all cases, CDSBC endeavours to complete investigations within the timelines provided in the *Health Professions Act*.

7. I made a complaint about my dentist/dental therapist/CDA. What kind of outcome can I expect?

CDSBC requires that its registrants are practising competently and ethically. We have legal powers under the *Health Professions Act* to investigate any complaint we receive about our registrants and to address concerns that present a risk to the public. These powers include the ability to reprimand a registrant, suspend, or cancel or place limits on a registrant's registration, and impose other sanctions. CDSBC's focus in resolving complaints is generally on remediation rather than punishment.

CDSBC requires that its registrants are practising competently and ethically. This role is forward-looking, and CDSBC's focus is generally on remediation rather than punishment. Reviewing the [summaries of complaints and their outcomes](#) that CDSBC publishes may give you an idea of the sorts of outcomes you can expect.

8. What is my role in the complaints process?

If you make a complaint, it is important that you are willing and able to provide additional information if CDSBC requests it. Often the initial complaint does not contain all the relevant facts, or new facts are learned during the investigation. Complainants who refuse to speak with CDSBC's complaint investigators make it difficult (or impossible) to effectively investigate their complaint.

9. Who will see the complaint I submit?

Complaints that have been accepted for investigation are then investigated by CDSBC's complaint investigators. Because of the specialized nature of dentistry, most complaint investigators are dentists themselves. As well, the complaint you submit will be provided to the dentist involved and they will be asked to provide a response. In most cases, you will be provided with a copy of the dentist's response.



10. Is the complaints process confidential?

While CDSBC makes every effort to ensure complaints are kept confidential, it cannot guarantee confidentiality. Our records are subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and may be disclosed to other persons whose interests may be affected. Note that if a complaint results in disciplinary action being taken, the outcome may become public.

Under the *Health Professions Act*, any information or documents that you receive from CDSBC during a complaint investigation must be kept private and cannot be used for any other purpose, including legal proceedings against a registrant.

11. What happens after I submit my complaint?

Once your complaint is accepted for investigation, a complaint investigator will be assigned and an investigation will be conducted. The registrant is usually asked to provide a written response to the complaint along with the patient records. Any other dentists involved in the patient's care may also be asked to provide a report and records.

The complaint you submit will be provided to the registrant involved and they will be asked to provide a response. Note that a complaint may be immediately dismissed by the Registrar if it is trivial, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, or if it concerns [a matter outside CDSBC's powers](#).

12. My dentist asked me to sign an agreement not to file a complaint, but now I have changed my mind. What can I do?

No agreement that you make with a dentist should keep you from filing a complaint if you have a concern.

13. What if I want to withdraw my complaint?

Occasionally a complainant will ask to withdraw their complaint after the investigation is underway. Because CDSBC's mandate is protection of the public, this is generally not possible unless all the issues raised by the complaint have been addressed. CDSBC views complaints as matters of public importance and generally investigates each complaint it receives to completion.

14. What happens once a decision is made?

Within 30 days of the Inquiry Committee's decision, you will receive a letter summarizing the investigation and the decision.



15. What if I am not satisfied with CDSBC's decision?

If you are concerned about the outcome of your complaint, you can apply for a review with the [Health Professions Review Board](#) (HPRB). The HPRB cannot order that CDSBC discipline the registrant, or require anybody to pay money to you. Rather, the HPRB's review looks at whether CDSBC's investigation of the complaint was adequate, and whether its decision was reasonable.