



A Guide to the Complaint Process

Are you concerned about the dental care that a dentist has provided?

We can help you deal with the situation. If you are unhappy about a professional interaction with a dentist, you have some choices to make. Almost always, your best first step is to speak to the dentist directly about your concern. If you do not wish to do so or if talking does not resolve matters, you can call or email the Board office at (709-579-2391 or nldb@nf.aibn.com). We can suggest next steps— including filing a complaint about the dentist or other licensed staff.

Filing a complaint is a serious matter that may harm your relationship with your dentist—but it can bring attention to an issue that may protect the public. It is the Board’s duty to review all complaints. That process can take a few months or longer, depending on the complexity of the complaint.

Making a complaint starts with a form

To file a formal complaint about a dentist or other licensed staff you must fill out the form on the Board’s website. We will send you a letter when we receive your completed complaint form.

Contact us:

Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Board
55 Elizabeth Ave, Suite 204
St. John’s , NL A1A 1W9
Ph. (709) 579-2391 Fax (709) 579-2392
Email: nldb@nf.aibn.com Web: www.nldb.ca

Your complaint is sent to your dentist or other licensed professional

The Board sends your complaint to the dentist and asks for a written response.

We can help resolve some cases.....

The Board Registrar reviews your complaint file and may try to resolve matters to everyone’s satisfaction if you and the dentist agree to this approach. If that is not possible, your case moves to a Board committee for further review.

... most complaints go to the Board's Complaint's Authorization Committee (CAC)

This Committee is made up of members of the public and dentists. Its job is to determine if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a dentist has engaged in misconduct. The Committee will review all dental records and responses received on the matter. The Committee may interview the principals or request further review of the matter by specialists from other jurisdictions. Expert opinion from other professions may also be sought. Finally, an investigator may be appointed to contact people and institutions who may have information about your complaint. When copies of personal health records are required relating to the complaint the Board will always require a release of information from those persons involved.

After the Committee reviews all relevant information, it has four choices in the disposition of the complaint:

- Dismiss the complaint (sometimes giving the dentist direction)
- Give the dentist a warning or guidance ("caution or counsel")
- Send the complaint to alternative dispute resolution
- Ask the Board Registrar to refer the complaint to a public hearing

Public hearings deal with the most serious complaints

Public hearings are run by an appointed "tribunal" --- three people who listen to evidence presented by the Board and the dentist. The Board presents your complaint and you may be called as a witness. The process is usually open to the public.

The tribunal makes a ruling on the evidence. It can dismiss the complaint, or it can:

- restrict a dentist's practice
- suspend a dentist's licence
- require the dentist to re-train

Some complaints are outside the scope of the Board's mandate

The Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Board has the power to deal with complaints about the professional behaviour of dentists and dental allied professionals licensed by the Board. It cannot deal with complaints about:

- hospitals, clinics, correctional facilities, denturists, and dental hygienists.

Legally, our process means that we ...

- cannot give dental opinions, diagnosis, referrals, or treatment—we cannot direct any patient's care
- must tell a dentist when a complaint is filed, so they can respond
- must share relevant information about the complaint with the dentist
- cannot provide financial compensation to complainants or dentists or anyone. The Board's complaint process is different from a civil (court) process.