

# COMPLAINTS PROCESS & OUTCOMES



— COLLEGE OF —  
**CHIROPRACTORS**  
— OF ALBERTA —

## **The privilege of self-regulation**

The College of Chiropractors of Alberta (CCOA) is responsible for regulating chiropractors under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA). Included in this role of self-regulation is the obligation to investigate complaints about chiropractors.

## **Our approach to complaints**

We view complaints about chiropractors as problems to be solved. A complaint may provide the opportunity for a chiropractor to change behavior or to improve some aspect of practice. In some instances, when there is a question of knowledge or skill, assessment and remedial training may be required. Our experience is that the best outcome happens when the chiropractor is a willing participant in the complaint process.

## **Complaints can involve misunderstandings or misinterpretations**

A significant number of complaints arise due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the chiropractor's actions. In such cases we try to bridge the gap. We recognize that we may not always be able to save the relationship between the patient and the chiropractor, but we may be able to achieve acknowledgment and apology from the chiropractor.

## **Formal disciplinary action is taken as a last resort**

In rare cases the CCOA will pursue formal disciplinary action against a chiropractor. Typically this type of approach is reserved for complaints where information available indicates a very serious offence, or when the chiropractor is a repeat offender. The CCOA may first attempt to pursue a formal contract between the CCOA and the chiropractor, with the consent of the complainant. This has a very similar outcome to a formal hearing before a Hearing Tribunal, but requires considerably less time and cost to conclude, and may result in the most favourable resolution. The most extreme formal route is to refer the complaint to a disciplinary hearing.

Before referring the complaint to a hearing before a Hearing Tribunal, we prefer, where possible, to work with the chiropractor to identify the problem and to work towards a solution. We believe that the chances of long-term success with this approach are much higher than if disciplinary action is taken – action that may, in fact, be counter-productive to creating a positive change in the chiropractor's behavior.

## **What you can expect to happen after filing a complaint**

In all cases, we will clarify the issues put forward in a formal complaint and attempt to address them. We will also ask what outcome the complainant desires or expects.

We always hope the outcome of a complaint meets the expectations of the complainant. However, there are times where the complainant wants a much harsher penalty than is warranted, or requests an outcome (e.g. compensation) that is outside our mandate.

In all circumstances where the chiropractor has made an error, the CCOA tries to ensure that such problems will not happen again. Remember, our goal is to have competent chiropractors practicing safely and ethically.