



National Eating Disorder Information Centre

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

# FILING A REPORT OR COMPLAINT ABOUT A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER In Ontario

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 or report.

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 Ontario'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 Ontario, "recovery coach", "nutritionist", and "counsellor" are not regulated titles or professions, and individuals practising these professions are not accountable to a specific regulatory college.

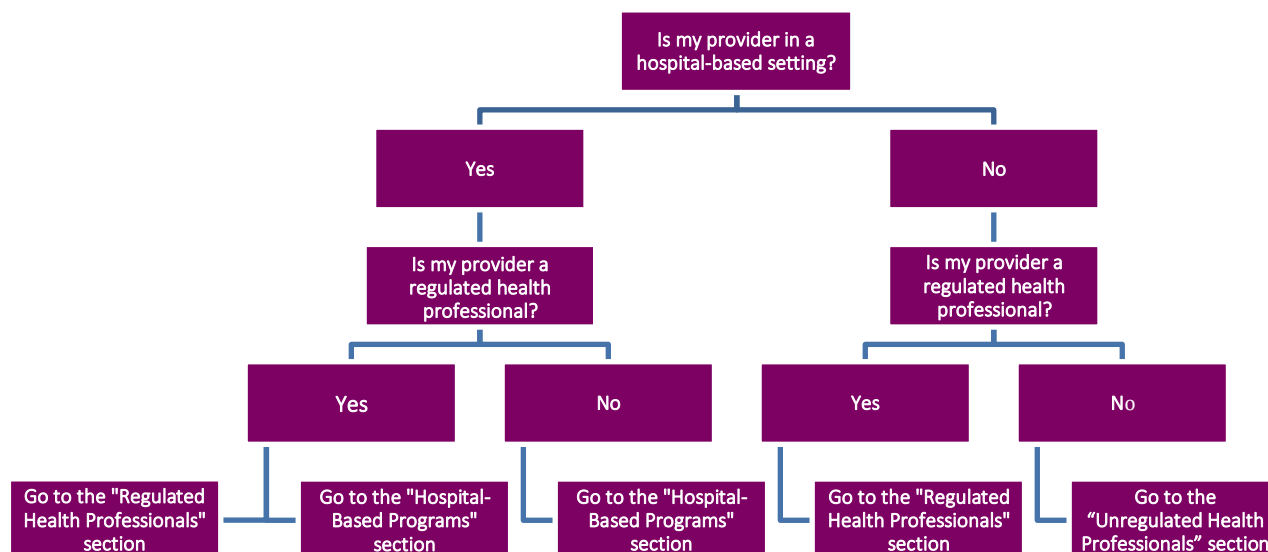
Please note that some regulated professionals may choose to use an unregulated title alongside their regulated one. For example, a social worker may also refer to themselves as a counsellor because it better describes their role to the public. If you are uncertain whether a healthcare provider is regulated,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

## Should I Make a Report or 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 Report or 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 Ontario college\*. Click on the name of a college to find its corresponding public register:

College	Regulated Title(s)	Other Commonly Used Titles
<a href="#">College of Dietitians of Ontario</a>	- Registered Dietitian (RD) - Dietitian	
<a href="#">Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO)</a>	- Dentist - Dental Surgeon	
<a href="#">College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO)</a>	- Dental Hygienist	

<a href="#"><u>College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physician</li> <li>- Surgeon</li> <li>- Osteopath</li> <li>- Psychiatrist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doctor</li> <li>- Medical Doctor</li> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>College of Naturopaths of Ontario</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Naturopath</li> <li>- Naturopathic Doctor (ND)</li> </ul>	
<a href="#"><u>College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nurse</li> <li>- Nurse Practitioner (NP)</li> <li>- Registered Nurse (RN)</li> <li>- Registered Practical Nurse (RPN)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Occupational Therapist (OT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychologist</li> <li>- Psychological Associate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Registered Psychotherapist (RP)</li> <li>- Registered Psychotherapist (Qualifying)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Worker</li> <li>- Social Service Worker</li> <li>- Registered Social Worker</li> <li>- Registered Social Service Worker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychotherapist**</li> </ul>

\*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 Ontario. For more information, please consult the [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#).

\*\*A note about the term “psychotherapist”: while the title “Registered Psychotherapist” is restricted to those registered with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO), individuals registered with one of five other regulatory colleges in Ontario (i.e., physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, and social workers) are allowed to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy as defined by the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* **if they have the competence to do so**, and present themselves as psychotherapists. For instance, a nurse who provides psychotherapy may present their qualifications as:

Firstname Lastname, RN  
Psychotherapist

Importantly, when determining the regulatory college to which an individual belongs, it is their regulated title that matters. For instance, in the example above, the abbreviation “RN” indicates that Firstname Lastname is a nurse, and you could search their registration on the College of Nurses of Ontario’s public register.

## Complaints vs. Reports

Complaints and reports are two different means of submitting a concern to a college. For the most part, the channels for members of the public to raise a concern about an individual registered with them are similar across colleges. The main differences between complaints and reports are outlined below:

Complaints	Reports
Triggers formal process in which all necessary steps must be followed.	No formal process is required—the college can investigate the concern at their discretion.
The complainant is required to provide their name and contact information, and their name and comments in the complaint will be provided to the healthcare professional under investigation.	In most cases, the reporter can choose to remain anonymous (the exception being reports to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario)
If the complainant is a client of the healthcare professional under investigation, they must give consent for the college to access their clinical file in order to submit the complaint.	The reporter is not required to provide consent for the college to access their clinical file in order to proceed with a report. Unless consent is provided, the college may investigate the report without accessing the reporter's clinical file.
The complainant is kept up to date about the progress of the complaint and receives a written decision.	The reporter will not receive updates about the process or know when a decision has been reached.
There is a set time for investigating a complaint and the complainant may appeal to the <a href="#">Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB)</a> if they disagree with the outcome.	There is no set time for investigating a report and no opportunity to appeal to the <a href="#">Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB)</a> . Colleges are not required to and will not investigate every report. It is at the discretion of the Registrar.

## Resource List

### College of Dietitians of Ontario

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints and Reports](#)

### Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO)

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)

[Complaints and Reports](#)

### College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO)

[Homepage](#)

[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Naturopaths of Ontario**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

**Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW)**

[Homepage](#)  
[Public Register](#)  
[Complaints and Reports](#)

## **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 Patient Relations (also called Patient Experience) at the hospital. In Ontario, all hospitals have a patient relations 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 relations 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 Relations department 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 Patient Relations to access your personal health information to make a complaint. If Patient Relations is unable to bring forward a resolution, or you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may wish to file a complaint with the [Office of the Patient Ombudsman](#). However, to do so, you are required to provide consent for the Patient Ombudsman to access your personal health information, which may include anything from your name to your medical history. The Patient Ombudsman may share your personal information for the purpose of facilitating a resolution or investigating the complaint, however, they will never do so without your consent. Your information may be used by the Patient Ombudsman to contact you, bring forward a satisfactory resolution or conduct an investigation if deemed necessary. **Note:** For regulated providers working within a hospital-based setting, it is not within the scope of the Office of the Patient Ombudsman to investigate as there is other recourse (i.e., the provider's regulatory college) for making a report or 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 relations process at the University Health Network (UHN) hospitals can be found at the following link:

[https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Patient\\_Services/Patient\\_Relations/Pages/contact\\_us.aspx](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Patient_Services/Patient_Relations/Pages/contact_us.aspx)

## 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 an Ontario business, you can file a consumer complaint. Please consult the following Government of Ontario webpage for more details: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/filing-consumer-complaint>

**Be aware that 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 OCSWSSW’s Public Register, you could contact OCSWSSW to discuss your concerns.

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