

MIDWIFERY REGULATORY COUNCIL OF NOVA SCOTIA (MRCNS)

GUIDE FOR RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT

I've Received a Complaint, What Should I Do?

After receiving a written complaint, the Council will investigate the allegations. The nature of an investigation depends on the type and severity of the allegations. Common investigative steps include:

- obtaining additional information from the complainant
- obtaining medical documents
- conducting witness interviews
- reviewing relevant health care policies and procedures

The midwife is provided with an opportunity to review the evidence and respond to the allegations. This provision is required by law. In most cases, the complainant is then given the opportunity to review and comment on the midwife's response to the complaint.

Investigations are overseen by the Registrar.

Timeframe

Investigations are often complex, and delays are common while MRCNS seeks relevant information from third parties, such as medical documentation. Investigations may take longer than 12 months to complete. MRCNS will update complainants on the status of the investigation at certain intervals. Complainants and registrants are encouraged to contact MRCNS with questions during the investigation.

The midwife's role during an investigation

Taking part in an investigation is often uncomfortable for all those involved. However, the process is not intended to be punitive. An investigation is a neutral information-gathering process. Midwives under investigation have an obligation to engage in the information-gathering process. We encourage midwives to seek legal help for the matter under investigation.

Being subject to investigation by MRCNS is integral to the privilege of belonging to a self-regulated profession.

Be calm and thoughtful in your reaction

Remember complaints are not uncommon; many professionals need to address complaints in the course of their career.

Your professional obligation is to respond to communications promptly and honestly.

Seek help

MRCNS encourages you to seek out support from legal counsel when responding to a complaint. If neither is available, consult with a trusted colleague or friend.

Recognize that it can be stressful to respond to a complaint and can be very helpful to receive the support of an experienced, objective advisor.

Prepare a response to MRCNS about the complaint

MRCNS recommends you provide a written response to the complaint, and further recommends you at least consider the need to address each of the concerns raised in the complaint. with any information regarding the matter that you believe the registrar should consider. Think about what the Registrar needs to understand about your side of the story and what they should consider when addressing each of the concerns raised.

- Be factual and thorough in your response.
- Remember the complainant will read your response, as he/she will be provided with a copy of it.
- Remember you have professional responsibilities, no matter how difficult the situation may be.
- If there are other witnesses to an event complained of, have the witness(es) prepare a factual and thorough account and include it with your response.
- Include any supporting documents. Be sure you don't include any confidential information.

Consider whether an apology is appropriate

If an apology or other explanation of the situation is appropriate and might quickly resolve the situation, consider contacting the complainant directly (if appropriate) or incorporating words of apology into your response. Particularly if you weren't aware of the problem until you got the complaint, this is your chance to promptly address the complainant's concerns.

If required under your insurance policy, notify your insurer.