



## Information for the Public: The Professional Conduct Process

### The Role of the NSRP in the Complaint Process

The Nova Scotia Regulator of Psychology (NSRP) is the governing body for Psychologists (Practising and Candidates) in Nova Scotia. It is our statutory responsibility to protect the public by ensuring psychologists meet **appropriate standards** of practice and ethical conduct.

Psychologists may be disciplined for practice that falls below acceptable minimum standards for the profession, or for engaging in malpractice, incompetent practice, or other unethical conduct. Our formal, neutral investigation process serves to:

- **Uphold Standards:** Ensure psychologists follow the laws, regulations, and ethics of the profession.
- **Provide Accountability:** Offer a transparent avenue for the public to raise concerns about professional behavior.

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### Before You File a Complaint: Key Limitations

To ensure our process is the right fit for your concerns, please review these legal constraints under the *Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*:

- **No Clinical "Second Opinions":** The NSRP reviews a psychologist's conduct and standards of practice. We cannot provide clinical services, issue a new psychological opinion, change a diagnosis, or rewrite a professional report.
- **No Legal Admissibility:** Under Section 138(3) of the RHPA, NSRP investigations and decisions cannot be used as evidence in civil court, custody disputes, or insurance/benefit appeals.
- **No Record Changes:** We cannot order a psychologist to change or delete a clinical record or professional opinion.
- **No Financial Compensation:** The NSRP cannot award money, damages, or refunds. This must be pursued through the civil court system.
- **Third-Party Limitations:** If you are not the client, we cannot share confidential information or investigative details with you without the client's express written consent.

- **Public Interest Focus:** Our mandate is to protect the public and regulate the profession. We do not act as an advocate for the psychologist OR the complainant.

### Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

The Registrar reviews all submissions to determine if they meet the legal definition of a complaint. If the allegation does not meet all inclusion criteria, or meets one or more exclusion criteria, the Registrar may decline to process or dismiss the matter.

| Inclusion Criteria  | Exclusion Criteria (NSRP may decline)  |
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| The allegation is against a current or former <b>NSRP</b> Registered Psychologist or Candidate.           | The individual is not an <b>NSRP</b> Registered Psychologist or Candidate.   |
| The conduct relates to a breach of <b>NSRP</b> Standards, the Code of Ethics, or professional misconduct. | The matter is better addressed by another entity (e.g., Employer, School Board, Human Rights Commission, or Courts). |
| The matter falls within the jurisdiction and objects of the <b>NSRP</b> .                                 | The allegation relates to an administrative matter (e.g., scheduling or fee disputes).                               |
|   | The allegation appears frivolous, vexatious, or an abuse of process.   |
|   | The allegation is anonymous or is against a deceased member.   |

### Providing Documentation for a Complaint

To ensure a timely and fair review of your concerns, please follow these guidelines regarding supporting materials:

- **Focus on Relevance:** Only provide documents that directly relate to the specific conduct you are reporting.
- **Avoid "Data Dumps":** Please do not send original records or large volumes of documentation (such as entire medical files) unless specifically requested.

- **Policy on Recordings:** The **NSRP** generally does not accept surreptitious (secret) audio or video recordings. The **NSRP** determines the relevance and admissibility of all evidence; please do not send recordings unless the Registrar has explicitly requested them.
  - **Procedural Fairness:** Please be aware that under the principles of natural justice, **any** information or documentation you provide to the **NSRP** will be shared with the psychologist to allow them a fair opportunity to respond.
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## The Complaints Process

1. **Submission:** Complete the formal Complaint Form and sign the required Release of Information forms.
2. **Registrar Review & Investigation:** The Registrar reviews the allegations and has the authority to conduct an investigation to gather relevant information, including responses from the psychologist. If the Registrar determines the matter does not constitute a complaint or does not warrant further action, they may **decline to process or dismiss** the matter. You will be notified of the reasons in writing.
3. **Reconsideration:** If the Registrar declines to process or dismisses a matter, the complainant has **30 days** to request in writing that the decision be reviewed by the designated committee.
4. **Committee Review:** If the matter is referred to the Committee, they will review the investigation file. The Committee may conduct further investigation or use professional consultants if required to fulfill the public interest mandate.
5. **Committee Decision:** The Committee reviews the evidence and may:
  - **Dismiss** the complaint.
  - **Issue a Caution** (written advice to the psychologist regarding future conduct).
  - **Issue a Reprimand** (a formal disciplinary finding).
  - **Refer the matter to a Hearing** for serious concerns regarding the psychologist's license.

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## Timelines & Expectation Management

The NSRP is committed to a thorough and fair process. Because investigations involve gathering clinical records, allowing for professional responses, and review by committees, the following timeframes apply:

- **Minimum Duration:** Investigations of complaints usually take a minimum of three months to complete once they have started.

- **Average Range:** Most matters typically require 6 to 18 months to reach a conclusion.
  - **Complex Cases:** Complex complaints—such as those requiring a specialist's assessment or a special hearing to protect the public—can take 18 months or longer.
  - **No Fixed Deadlines:** In fulfilling its primary mandate to protect the public, the Committee is not bound by set timeframes.
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## Staying Informed

Due to privacy and confidentiality obligations, the NSRP may only be able to provide you with limited information while an investigation is ongoing.

- **Substantive Updates:** The NSRP will communicate with you to request additional information or to provide updates when appropriate. You will receive a copy of the final decision once the matter is concluded.
  - **Regular Reminders:** There may be lengthy periods where there are no substantive updates to provide. If you would like a brief statement every three months to let you know the matter is still under consideration, simply let the NSRP know ([nsbep@nsbep.org](mailto:nsbep@nsbep.org)).
  - **Your Choice:** You may request these reminders by email (preferred) or mail, and you may change the frequency or cancel them at any time.
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## Contact the NSRP

Before lodging a formal complaint, you are encouraged to contact the **NSRP** to confirm the individual is a Registered Psychologist and to discuss the limitations of our process. Email contact is preferred.

**The Registrar or Registrar's Designate** Nova Scotia Regulator of Psychology

**Email:** [nsbep@nsbep.org](mailto:nsbep@nsbep.org)

**Fax:** 902-423-0058

**Mailing and Courier Address:** (All couriers accepted)

103-287 Lacewood Dr., Suite 331

Halifax, NS B3M 3Y7

Please enclose documents in an envelope or package for secure handling.

**Website:** [www.ns-rp.ca](http://www.ns-rp.ca)

**Telephone:** (902) 423-2238

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