

## CPCA Complaints and Discipline Process & Timelines

**Question #1: What are the standard procedural steps from the receipt of a complaint to the final resolution within CPCA's disciplinary process?**

The industry standard for regulatory complaints and discipline process is built on the foundation of **Administrative Fairness** (or "natural justice"). This process is designed to **protect the public** while ensuring that the regulated professional (the member) is **treated fairly** throughout the proceedings.

The CPCA has public representation on both the Complaints and Discipline Committees to ensure the process remains transparent and responsible for establishing both counsellor competency and public safety. The CPCA, as with many regulators in Canada follow a "two-stage" model that strictly separates the investigation from the final adjudication to prevent bias. The following stages are completed by 2 separate autonomous standing committees of the CPCA.

### **First Stage of Standard Actions is facilitated by the Complaints Committee:**

1. **Intake & Screening** - The regulatory body receives a written complaint and determines if it has the jurisdiction to act. Trivial or vexatious complaints may be dismissed early.
2. **Investigation** - An investigator or committee (e.g., Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee) gathers evidence. This includes requesting a written response from the member and interviewing witnesses.
3. **Decision to Refer** - The screening committee reviews the evidence and decides whether to dismiss the matter, issue a caution, or refer the case to a formal Discipline Committee for a hearing and consequential action(s).

### **Second Stage of Standard Actions is facilitated by the Discipline Committee:**

4. **Adjudication (Hearing)** - Further investigation for clarity and for planning a formal quasi-judicial hearing may take place. The regulatory body acts as the "prosecutor," and the member has the right to legal counsel and to cross-examine witnesses.
5. **Decision & Sanction** - If misconduct is found, the panel determines an appropriate penalty, ranging from a reprimand or fine to suspension or revocation of the license to practice.

## Question #2: What timelines are there for the Complaints and Discipline process?

Because the CPCA is a voluntary self-regulatory body, its execution is measured differently than a regulatory college. Since the CPCA is not regulated by statute, its procedures are not subject to the same strict administrative law principles as statutory tribunals (like the CRPO). However, they follow the principles of natural justice.

**If a member belongs to both the CPCA and a provincial regulatory college** (like the CRPO in Ontario or the NSCCT in Nova Scotia), the CPCA will stay its investigation until the provincial regulator has finished its process. This can make the "actual days to close" for the CPCA appear much longer, potentially up to 2 years. If the therapist in question is a Registered Psychotherapist (RP) in Ontario, the [CRPO's average of 270 days](#) is the more legally significant "performance standard" to follow, as their decision carries the weight of law.

So, what are the CPCA Complaints and Discipline timelines?

### **The CPCA Targeted Timelines are as follows:**

- **Screening/Dismissal: 60-90 days.** (Time to determine if a complaint has merit).
- **Full Investigation: 3-6 months.** (Standard for gathering evidence and committee review).
- **Adjudication/Hearing: 6-9 months.** The industry standard is 9-12 months for the investigation stage alone. If a hearing is not required, because the evidence stands on its own merit, the timeline is closer to 3-4 months.

### **Other counselling associations such as the CCPA estimate their timelines as follows:**

- Screening/Dismissal: 60–90 days. (Time to determine if a complaint has merit).
- Full Investigation: 6–12 months. (Standard for gathering evidence and committee review).
- Adjudication/Hearing: 12–24 months. (Only for most serious ethical violations).

**The CPCA usual and specific targeted timelines in each of these stages is outlined below:**

- The written complaint is submitted to the Complaints Committee and sent to the CPCA member to whom the complaint has been made **within 24 business hours** of being received.
- The member then has up to **21 days to respond in writing** to the Complaints Committee. (The industry standard is 30 days.)
- This committee generally completes their **investigation within 30-60 days**.
- Both the complainant and the member receive a **written response and closing investigation report** from this committee following.
- It is not uncommon for the committee to request additional documentation from the complainant or the member in order to complete a thorough investigation which can add to these timelines.

These processes are slow by design to satisfy Administrative Fairness. The professional has a "right to be heard," which includes a standard 30-day window to respond to the initial complaint and another window to respond to any new evidence gathered during the investigation. Formal Discipline/Hearings can take up to 18 to 24+ months. If a matter is referred to a formal discipline hearing, the process extends significantly due to legal scheduling, disclosure of evidence, and the hearing itself.

### **Question #3: What other factors could delay the Complaints & Discipline process?**

Other variables that can contribute to extend the procedural timelines beyond 12 months are:

- **Complexity:** Large volumes of documents, medical records or complex financial audits.
- **Wait Times for Experts:** Regulators often hire external experts to review a member's conduct; waiting for these reports is a common bottleneck.
- **Legal Challenges:** Procedural motions or judicial reviews (appeals to court) filed by the professional can pause the college's internal timeline.
- **Parallel Proceedings:** If there is an ongoing criminal investigation or civil

lawsuit regarding the same incident, the regulatory process is often "stayed" (paused) until the court matter concludes.

Following receipt of the written Complaints Committee report, the Discipline Committee convenes within 30-60 days. The committee deliberates calls for a hearing when required. Hearings are scheduled 1 month in advance so that there all has equal time to arrange schedules etc. and attend the hearing. Hearings proceed whether both parties appear or not. This whole process timeline is defined by the availability of all involved in the process and can be stayed when there are court proceedings occurring that involve the member in question. Once the court proceedings have been completed, the Discipline Committee reconvenes on the matter.

Variables that can extend the procedural timelines are:

- **A Second Hearing:** There is sometimes a need for a second hearing. Hearings are limited to 3 hours and in certain cases, if a hearing needs more time, a second hearing will take place.
- **Need for Additional Documentation:** It is not uncommon for the committee to request additional documentation from the complainant or the member in order to complete a thorough investigation in the planning and preparation for a disciplinary hearing.

## Question #4: Do the CPCA timelines for Complaints & Disciplinary Process meet Industry Standards?

You will see from the research copied below, that the CPCA practice standards meet those of the regulatory colleges and often complete the processes in a briefer time period. The Industry Standard for a Regulatory College are demonstrated in this report from CRPO 2024-2025:

*"For the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario ([CRPO](#)), the "performance against standards" for complaints and discipline is primarily tracked through the **College Performance Measurement Framework (CPMF)**, a mandatory reporting tool for all Ontario health colleges.*

As of early 2026, based on their [latest performance data](#) and [2024–2025 reporting](#), here are the actual average timelines:

### 1. Complaint Resolution Timelines

The CRPO tracks the time from the date a complaint is received to the date the **Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC)** issues a written decision. [Complaints & Reports - CRPO](#)

**Actual Average Processing Time: 270 days** (approximately 9 months).

**Standard Benchmark:** The College aims to provide a status update to both the complainant and the registrant if the matter has not been resolved within **150 days**.

**Initial Notification:** The professional is typically notified of a complaint within **14 days** of the College receiving it.

### 2. Performance Breakdown by Stage

The total 270-day average is an aggregate of several distinct phases:

*Phase Standard / Actual Duration*

**Intake & Response Registrants have 30 days** to provide an initial written response.

**Investigation Gathering records and expert reports** often accounts for the largest portion of the **9-month** average.

**Committee Review** The ICRC meets to review the final investigative report and issue a decision.

**Discipline Hearing** If referred to discipline, the process often extends by **an additional 12–18 months.**”

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We hope that understanding more of the CPCA Complaints & Discipline process will help to give greater understanding regarding the timelines required to ensure administrative fairness while also designed to protect the public.