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National Eating Disorder Information Centre

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FILING A COMPLAINT ABOUT A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER In the Northwest Territories

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.

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 Northwest Territories' many regulatory bodies. While some regulated health professionals work in **hospitals or community health centres**, others deliver their services through community agencies or private clinics.

There are also individuals providing eating disorder care who are **unregulated**. For example, in the Northwest Territories, "recovery coach", "counsellor", or "nutritionist" are not regulated titles or professions, and individuals practising as such are not accountable to a specific regulatory body.

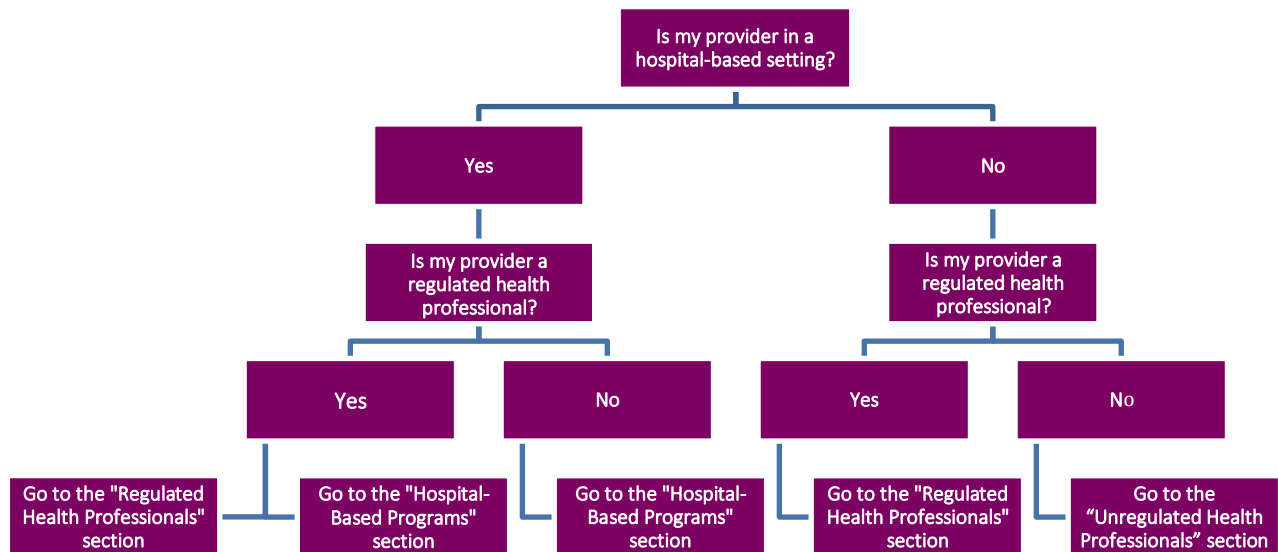
Additionally, while territorial legislation to protect titles such as "dietitian", or "psychotherapist" does not exist in Northwest Territories, a healthcare provider using one of these titles should be registered with the corresponding regulatory body in a province where it is regulated. For instance, someone practising as a dietitian in the Northwest Territories may choose to register with one or more of the provincial bodies that govern dietetic practice. If you are uncertain whether a Northwest Territories healthcare provider is regulated, you may wish to ask if they are registered in another Canadian province or territory.

Should I Make a 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 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

In Northwest Territories, some health professionals are regulated by the government, while others are regulated by independent organisations. In both cases, it is the responsibility of each regulatory body to protect the public from unprofessional conduct and hold the registrants of its profession accountable for the care they provide. If you have concerns about a regulated health professional, you may wish to file a complaint with their corresponding regulatory body. To do so, you must submit a detailed written account of your concerns and give consent to access your clinical file for the purposes of investigation. Upon receiving a complaint, the regulatory body initiates a formal process, adhering to all necessary steps. After reviewing the complaint the regulatory body contacts both the complainant and the healthcare professional under investigation to discuss the details. During this process, the complainant's name and statement are shared with the professional to allow them an opportunity to respond. The regulatory body listens impartially to both sides and may conduct a formal investigation if deemed necessary. The complainant is kept informed about the complaint's progress and receives a written decision regarding its resolution.

As there are slight differences among the regulatory bodies in the process of initiating a complaint, for the most accurate, step-by-step information, please refer to the corresponding regulatory bodies' website. You can find them linked in the table below.

Regulatory Body	Regulated Title(s)
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The Department of Health and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dental Hygienist - Dentist - Dental Surgeon - Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) - Naturopathic Doctor (ND) - Physician - Surgeon - Psychiatrist - Psychologist - Social Worker (RSW)
Registered Nurses Association of Northwest Territories and Nunavut (RNANT/NU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registered Nurse (RN) - Nurse Practitioner (NP)

*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 the Northwest Territories. For more information, please consult this Department of Health and Social Service [webpage](#).

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 the Office of Client Experience (also called Patient Relations) at the hospital. In Northwest Territories, all hospitals have a client experience 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. Client Experience 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 Client Experience 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 Client Experience to access your personal health information to make a complaint. If Client Experience 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 Ombud Northwest Territories](#). However, to do so, you are required to provide consent for the Ombud to access your personal health information, which may include anything from your name to your medical history. The Ombud 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 Ombud 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 Ombud to investigate as there is other recourse (i.e., the provider’s regulatory body) 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 Client Experience at the hospital *and* the provider’s regulatory body.

An example of the client experience process in the Northwest Territories’ hospitals or community health centres can be found at the following link: <https://www.nthssa.ca/en/services/office-client-experience>

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 body 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 a Northwest Territories business, you may file a consumer complaint through the [Better Business Bureau](#).

Be aware that it is illegal for a care provider to represent themselves as a regulated professional if they are not registered with the relevant regulatory body. If a provider falsely claims to be regulated, you may in fact file a report or complaint with the corresponding regulatory body. For example, if you have concerns about a “Registered Nurse” providing you with medical monitoring but whose name does not appear on RNANT’s Public Register, you could contact RNANT to discuss your concerns.

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