



# Responding to A Professional Complaint

Registered Veterinary Technicians



ONTARIO  
ASSOCIATION OF  
VETERINARY  
TECHNICIANS

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## Responding to a Complaint: Step-by-Step

- 1. Clarify the issue.** Before making any attempt to respond to a complaint, you should first wait for the committee to clarify the complainant's issues. In this way, you can focus on addressing the complainant's specific concerns. This part of the process may take several weeks following receipt of the original letter of complaint. Next, you should consult any workplace records to review how events relating to the complaint were originally documented. Even if you have a great memory, you should know that the complaints committee will rely heavily on the official documentation for the best description of those events.
- 2. Identify other witnesses.** Once the issues are clarified the committee will discuss the events of the case with others to obtain additional perspectives. Avoid soliciting submissions from co-workers and submitting them to the committee yourself. It is preferable that you simply identify these witnesses to the committee and let the committee approach them directly for a submission. Neutral third party accounts are more valuable to the committee. While you may not knowingly influence the submissions of others, approaching them can give that impression.
- 3. Respond to the complaint.** Any response you submit to the complaint should be professional and focus on the issues. Approach your response with focus to addressing the specifics of the complaint.
- 4. Include Additional Supporting Materials.** Related patient medical records, diagnostic images, laboratory findings or relevant correspondence may be included to assist in the investigation of the complaint. All supporting materials should directly relate to the complaint specifics.



### Who Can I Talk to?



Receiving a formal complaint concerning your professional conduct may be one of the most stressful and upsetting events in your career as a Registered Veterinary Technician.

As a regulatory body, the investigation of professional complaints made against Registered members is a responsibility of the OAVT. A second role that the OAVT plays is one of an associated body. As a member of the OAVT, you are entitled to access independent legal counsel through your professional liability insurance.

Contact the OAVT to speak with the Registrar or a member of the administrative team in order to provide you with the contact information of the insurer who is best suited to review your options. Call 1-800-675-1859.

**Submit your written response and all accessory documents by email or mail:**  
**The Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians**  
**107-100 Stone Rd. W | Guelph, ON | N1G 5L3**  
**[oavt@oavt.org](mailto:oavt@oavt.org)**

# An Open and Transparent Process

Under the authority of the OAVT Act (Bill Pr3, 1993), the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians is mandated to promote, maintain and regulate the professional standards of its members. This mandate includes the establishment of a complaints committee to screen professional complaints made against Registered Veterinary Technicians.

*As a self-regulated profession, one crucial regulatory responsibility is to act in the best interest of the public.*



## Outcomes of the Complaints Process

It is natural to want to know what consequences might arise from the investigation of a complaint. The complaints committee is a screening committee and its principle mandate is to determine whether any given complaint should be referred to the **discipline committee** or the **fitness to practice committee**. The complaints committee may decide to take no further action, require you to receive a caution or it may take some other action that is appropriate under the circumstances and permissible under the Association's by-laws. The committee may also decide that a complaint is frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of process and take no further action.

The committee is composed of five individuals; one Director of the Association, two RVT members who are not Directors and two members of the public who are not members of the profession. At the conclusion of its investigation, the committee produces a written decision with supporting reasons. This written decision is provided to both you and the complainant.

# Checklist

- Wait for the confirmed list of issues
- Review all workplace records
- Provide the names and contact information of other witnesses
- Address only the confirmed issues
- Obtain permission to submit workplace/patient records
- Submit only materials relating to the issues
- Remain professional and keep emotions out of your response
- Explain your role
- Avoid assigning blame
- Do not contact the complainant
- Seek legal counsel
- Be patient

## Supporting RVT Best Practices Supports Your Best Interests

The OAVT complaints process is designed to ensure that members are treated fairly in the investigation of any complaint while fulfilling its mandate of regulating the profession in the public interest. This information brochure is designed to assist you in your efforts to respond to a complaint while explaining the open and transparent processes used by the complaints committee.

