

## Message for Consumers

The information in this brochure is an interpretation of the Board's regulations and advice given by the Education and Outreach Division. The information is provided for the benefit of consumers and is subject to change. You may refer to the Board's regulations, 243 CMR, for more information.

A full copy of the Regulations, along with other information, is available at no charge to consumers on the Board's web site at

[www.massmedboard.org](http://www.massmedboard.org)

The Board also operates a toll-free consumer information line at

1-800-377-0550.

## Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine

The Board of Registration in Medicine is the state agency that licenses and regulates all Massachusetts physicians. The Board also reviews all consumer complaints about licensed physicians.

As part of its strong public protection mandate, the Board has the authority to discipline a physician who violates the Board's statutes and regulations.

Consumers are invited to learn more about the agency's work by visiting the Board's website at:

[www.massmedboard.org](http://www.massmedboard.org)

Consumers without Internet access should request public information and get assistance by calling:

617-654-9830

or

1-800-377-0550

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Deval L. Patrick  
Governor

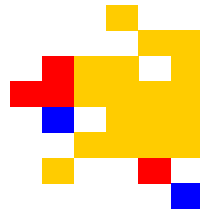
Timothy P. Murray  
Lt. Governor

## Patient Complaints .....A Consumer Guide



Further Information:  
[WWW.MASSMEDBOARD.ORG](http://WWW.MASSMEDBOARD.ORG)

# How To File A Complaint



A consumer can file a complaint against a Massachusetts physician or acupuncturist by submitting a complaint form to the Board of Registration in Medicine . The form should be filled out completely and clearly. It is especially important that the medical records release on the back of the form is signed. The complaint form can be downloaded from the Board's web site:

[www.massmedboard.org](http://www.massmedboard.org)

When the Board receives a complaint, staff members with medical, legal, investigative, and public health backgrounds review the information on the form and decide whether to open a formal complaint. The Board will notify the consumer by letter, usually within two weeks, of this decision.

The Board will not open a complaint in cases in which the consumer alleges conduct that is not within the Board's jurisdiction. For example, the complaint may concern a Dentist, not a Medical Doctor. In such cases, the staff would direct the consumer to the correct government agency.



When the Board opens a complaint, it is sent to the physician for a response. The physician must respond within 30 days of the date of the Board's request. The patient will receive a copy of the Physician's response.

After the physician's response is received, the Board may undertake additional investigation, such as obtaining and reviewing medical records and interviewing witnesses. Then the complaint and physician response and other materials are presented to the Complaint Committee, along with other information about the doctor in the Board's files. The Complaint Committee, consisting of at least two Board members, is a sub-committee of the Board.

The Complaint Committee can take various actions including dismissal of the complaint; closure with a letter of advice, concern or warning to the physician; a request for more investigation; or a recommendation to the full Board to take disciplinary action against the physician.

If the Complaint Committee does recommend formal disciplinary charges, the physician is entitled to due process of law, including a full administrative hearing, before final disciplinary action is taken by the Board.

A decision by the Complaint Committee to dismiss a complaint is final and the decision cannot be appealed. Complainants should



know that the Board's decision to dismiss a complaint indicates that further investigation is not likely to result in formal discipline of the physician, and, therefore, is not the best use of public resources.



After the Board concludes its investigation, the complaint, the physician's response, and many other materials developed during the Board's review of the case, become part of the physician's file and are available to the public.

Other helpful information about Massachusetts physicians is available to consumers through the Board's Physician Profiles Program. Information about the education, training, and practice of all Massachusetts physicians can be found by following the "Profiles" links on the on the Board's website: [www.massmedboard.org](http://www.massmedboard.org).

Consumers without Internet access can request a copy of a physician's profile by telephoning the Board's Call Center at 800-377-0550 or 617-654-9830.

Any member of the public may request a copy of a closed complaint file by contacting the Board's Public Information Call Center and paying a nominal charge.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Board of Registration in Medicine  
560 Harrison Ave. Suite G-4  
Boston, MA 02118