

What to expect as medical staff if called as a witness in a respectful workplace investigation

Introduction:

Maintaining a respectful workplace at Northern Health is crucial for the well-being and productivity of all Medical Staff, employees, Resident Doctors, contractors, students, and volunteers. When a workplace investigation is initiated in response to a complaint, it is essential for everyone involved to approach the process with professionalism and cooperation. This document provides guidance on how to prepare for a workplace investigation while upholding respect for all parties involved.

Review policies:

Familiarize yourself with the Northern Health policies and procedures related to workplace conduct and investigations. Understanding the rules and expectations will help you navigate the process more effectively.

Investigations may be led by investigators internal to Northern Health (usually from Human Resources - HR) or those external to Northern Health (usually lawyers or other HR professionals skilled in workplace conflict management. When it is a lawyer, that person is working for Northern Health as an investigator and is not acting as “legal counsel” to anyone in the process.

Maintain professionalism:

Throughout the investigation, demonstrate professionalism and respect towards all individuals involved. Avoid any actions or statements that could be perceived as retaliatory or inflammatory.

Cooperate with investigators:

Witnesses should fully cooperate with the investigators. This includes responding to email invitations, attending interviews, providing truthful and detailed information, and submitting any relevant documentation that may assist in the inquiry.

Confidentiality and privacy:

Respect the confidentiality of the investigation. Avoid discussing the details of the case with coworkers or others who are not directly involved. Confidentiality helps maintain the integrity of the investigation process.

What you share as a witness is protected and confidential and cannot be shared in a way that allows any retaliation. Retaliation under the RW policy is forbidden and will be dealt with promptly.



Seek legal support if necessary:

If you believe the investigation may have legal implications to you as a witness, consult with Canadian Medical Protection Association (CMPA) legal counsel (or appropriate legal advice) to understand your rights and responsibilities. Legal advice can help you navigate the process and ensure that your rights are protected. Physicians may also seek advice and support through the DOBC.

Prepare emotionally:

Workplace investigations can be stressful. Take the time to prepare emotionally for the process. Focus on maintaining a calm and composed demeanor during interviews, and refrain from making emotional or aggressive statements.

Seek the assistance of the Drs. of BC Physician Health Program (or NH EFAP) if necessary. The programs provide a variety of services for medical staff that can help them prepare for and navigate the process.

Promote a positive workplace culture:

Regardless of the investigation's outcome, contribute to fostering a positive workplace culture moving forward. Demonstrate commitment to respect, communication, and collaboration to rebuild and maintain a healthy work environment.

Conclusion:

Approaching a workplace investigation with a respectful and cooperative attitude is essential for all parties involved. By adhering to these guidelines, witnesses can contribute to a fair and thorough investigation process, ultimately fostering a Northern Health workplace culture built on trust and mutual respect.

Helpful links:

- [Policies - Procedures - Respectful Workplace - Grouped \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- [Policies - Procedures - Complaints Regarding the Conduct or Professional Practice of Members of NH Medical Staff - Grouped \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- [Medical Affairs - Medical Staff rules - Grouped \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- Physician Health Program 24-Hour Help Line [1-800-663-6729](tel:1-800-663-6729)
<https://www.physicianhealth.com/contact-us/>
- <https://healthbc.sharepoint.com/sites/LookingAfterOurMentalHealth-IntranetNH>