PIVOTAL RESEARCH Inc.™

Complaints Management Feedback Program

Outcomes Report 2025-26

April 14, 2026

CDHO

COLLEGE OF DENTAL HYGIENISTS OF ONTARIO

Table of Contents

3 Key Takeaways

5 Project Background

6 Methodology

7 Summary of Engagement

9 Complainant Intake Phase

16 Complainant Investigation Phase

20 Complainant Exit Interview(s)

24 Complainant Withdrawal Phase

26 Key Considerations

Key Takeaways

1. **The complaints process is functioning well and continues to mature -** CDHO's complaints process is broadly viewed as structured and professional, with most complainants reporting positive interactions and respectful communication with staff.

2. **Early-stage experience is generally positive, with some clarity gaps -** While most complainants were able to navigate the intake process, some experienced challenges understanding steps, timelines, and where to find information, highlighting opportunities to improve clarity and accessibility.

3. **Perceptions become more mixed during the investigation phase -** Confidence in the process is less consistent as complaints progress, with some participants expressing concerns around fairness, communication, and overall experience during the investigation stage.

4. **Closure and understanding of outcomes remain key gaps -** At the disposition stage, some complainants reported not feeling fully heard or achieving a sense of closure, and did not clearly understand the rationale behind decisions, representing a critical trust touchpoint.

Key Takeaways

5 **Participation remains limited, especially at the exit stage and among registrants -** Despite improved engagement overall, response volumes remain small, with very low participation in exit interviews and no registrant feedback captured, limiting insight into the full complaints experience.

6 **Strengthening participation is essential to unlocking program value -** Year three of the feedback program shows meaningful progress, with a 41% overall response rate indicating increased complainant engagement. However, participation declines at later stages of the complaint process. Strengthening engagement at these critical points will be essential to generating robust insights and reinforcing transparency and trust in the complaints process.

Project Background

This report presents findings from the 2025–26 Complaints Management Feedback Program for the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO). The program gathers structured feedback from complainants and registrants at key stages of the complaints process, including intake, investigation, and disposition—to support transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Building on prior years, the 2025–26 cycle focuses on strengthening participation and enhancing the quality of insights generated to inform ongoing process refinements and reinforce confidence in CDHO's complaints management approach.

Methodology & Participation Overview

Between March 2025 and February 2026, 16 complainants were engaged across various stages of the research process (via survey and interview invitations), while no registrants were engaged as they did not provide consent to participate in this research.

As complainants reached subsequent stages of the complaints process, they were invited to provide further feedback at later stages. Complainants were sent surveys via email, with email and phone reminders made where necessary.

Overall, a 41% response rate was achieved during this period. A total of 14 complainant surveys **were completed**. Nine (9) complaints reached the disposition phase during this research, however only **one (1) participated in the exit interview**.

Since the program's inception, a total of 36 individual complainants have been engaged across all stages of the feedback program.

Table 1. Total Complainants and Feedback Program Participation by Year

Starting Year	Total Complainants (All cases)	Total Engagement Touchpoints*	Participation in Feedback Program/ Completed Responses
2023	5	13	1
2024	15	32	9
2025	**16**	**37**	**15**

**Engagement reflects all survey or interview invitations sent across stages of the complaints process by Pivotal Research.*

Summary of Engagement

Complainant Feedback

Participation increased in 2025–26, with 16 complainants engaged across the complaints process and 15 responses captured across stages. Engagement was strongest at the intake phase, with nine (9) completed surveys, and remained consistent through the investigation phase.

Participation declined at later stages, with only one (1) exit interview completed despite nine (9) eligible cases at disposition.

This pattern reflects the emotional nature of the complaints process and the need to further reduce barriers to participation at the point of case closure.

The following sections outlines the feedback from the surveys and interview.

No registrants participated in the feedback program during this period, as consent was not provided.

Table 2. Complainant Engagement and Participation by Stage (2025–26)

Stage	Description	Tool	Eligible (Engaged)	Responded
Complaint Intake Phase	Initiated after CDHO receives the Confirmation of Issue and health release consent form	Online survey	16	9
Investigation Phase	Occurs after the record is presented to the Inquiries, Complaints & Reports Committee	Online survey	10	4
Disposition Phase	Thirty days after the Decision Letter has been sent (no appeal has been filed)	Exit interview	9	1
Complaint Withdrawal Phase	At any point during the complaint process, if the complainant withdraws their complaint	Online survey	2	1
TOTAL			**37**	**15**

Complainant Feedback – Intake Phase

Complaint Submission

In total, nine (9) complainants completed the intake phase survey. Complaints were submitted across multiple channels, including email (n=4), the CDHO website (n=3), and physical letter (n=2).

The distribution of submission methods suggests no single dominant channel, with both digital and non-digital approaches continuing to be used. This highlights the importance of maintaining multiple accessible pathways for submitting complaints.

Email
(n=4)

Website
(n=3)

Physical Letter
(n=2)

Complaint Process

Overall, most complainants reported positive experiences with the intake phase, indicating that the complaints process is generally accessible and functional.

However, clarity remains a key gap. Just under half of complainants (n=4) indicated they did not fully understand the steps required to file a complaint, and others reported difficulty locating information, unclear instructions, and timelines.

These findings suggest an opportunity to improve the clarity and usability of information provided to complainants at the intake stage.

Table 3. Complainant Agreement with Intake Phase Statements (2025–26)

Statement (n=9)	Agreement
I was able to easily locate information about CDHO's complaints process.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=6) Neutral (n=1) Disagree (n=1)
I understood clearly what I needed to do to file a complaint.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=4) Neutral (n=2) Disagree (n=2)
The instructions and information surrounding the College's complaints process are clear.	Strongly Agree (n=2) Agree (n=4) Neutral (n=2) Disagree (n=1)
The timelines were clearly communicated to me.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=5) Neutral (n=2) Disagree (n=1)

CDHO Website and Complaint Form

Complainants who submitted their complaint through the CDHO website (n=3) reported positive experiences with the complaint form, indicating it was easy to complete and could be done without assistance. Similarly, those submitting via email or physical letter (n=6) reported being able to draft their complaint independently.

While these findings suggest that submission tools are generally user-friendly, the small sample size and broader feedback on process clarity indicate opportunities to further enhance the overall user experience and accessibility of information.

Table 4. Complainant Agreement with Complaint Submission Methods (2025–26)

Statement	Agreement
The College's complaint form was easy to fill out. (n=3)*	Strongly Agree (n=2) Agree (n=1)
I was able to complete the CDHO's complaint form without assistance. (n=3)*	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=2)
I was able to draft my letter of complaint without assistance. (n=6)**	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=5)

** This statement was only asked to those who submitted their complaint on the CDHO website.*
***This statement was only asked to those who submitted their form via email or physical letter.*

Assistance from CDHO

Four (4) complainants contacted CDHO for assistance in preparing their complaint, while the remaining five (5) did not require support.

Among those who engaged with the College, experiences were largely positive, with most complainants (n=7) describing their interactions as positive or very positive.

These findings suggest that direct interactions with CDHO staff are a strength of the complaints process and contribute positively to the overall experience.

Contact with CDHO

Yes	No
(n=4)	(n=5)

Experience with CDHO

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral
(n=3)	(n=4)	(n=2)

Awareness of the Complaint Process

Awareness of the complaints process appears to be primarily driven by the CDHO website, with most respondents (n=3) indicating they learned about the process through this channel.

One complainant reported learning about the process through an external source (police department), suggesting that awareness may also occur through indirect pathways.

While based on a small sample, the findings suggest that awareness is largely driven by individuals actively seeking information, highlighting an opportunity to expand visibility through additional channels.

CDHO Website (n=3)

Police Department (n=1)

Additional Feedback

While overall perceptions of the intake phase were generally positive, verbatim feedback highlights several areas of friction.

All four complainants who provided additional feedback identified challenges in their experience, including issues with website functionality, delays in communication, and uncertainty in navigating the complaints process.

All four complainants identified challenges in their complaint submission experience.

Communication and Digital Issues

*"The form on the website wasn't working properly, so I had to use email. I would also prefer for there to be a **secure portal** to exchange documents, rather than having to deal with PDFs and passwords."*

*"It has been **about a month since I have heard anything back**. I am feeling a bit left in the dark in terms of updates and the progress of my claim."*

Trust / Fairness

*"I first sent a complaint in [DATE], but it **wasn't taken seriously**. I had to see a lawyer, which cost me some important fees….."*

*"For medical professionals, they don't seem to be too concerned about **protecting their good name**….."*

Complainant Feedback – Investigation Phase

Investigation Process

Four (4) complainants completed the investigation phase survey. While most reported that they understood what was required of them, perceptions of other elements of the investigation process were more variable.

Responses were mixed across key areas, including clarity of the process, communication, and perceived fairness. One complainant strongly disagreed with all elements of the investigation phase.

These findings suggest that, while some aspects of the investigation process are working well, the experience is not consistent and may present challenges for some complainants.

Table 5. Complainant Agreement with Investigation Phase Statements (2025–26)

Statement (n=4)	Agreement
The investigation process was straightforward.	Agree (n=1) Neutral (n=2) Strongly Disagree (n=1)
I understood how I would be involved in the process.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=1) Neutral (n=1) Strongly Disagree (n=1)
I understood what was required of me.	Agree (n=3) Strongly Agree (n=1)
The communications from CDHO were provided in a safe and respectful manner.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=1) Neutral (n=1) Strongly Disagree (n=1)
In my opinion, the investigation was conducted fairly.	Strongly Agree (n=1) Agree (n=1) Neutral (n=1) Strongly Disagree (n=1)

Complaint Investigator

Two complainants provided feedback on their complaint investigator, with one reporting a positive experience and the other a negative one.

While perceptions of the investigator varied, both complainants raised concerns about broader aspects of the complaints process, including delays, communication, and how their concerns were addressed.

This suggests that perceptions of the investigator are shaped by the overall complaints experience.

Perceptions of the investigator were shaped by broader process experiences, including whether complainants felt heard, taken seriously, and supported throughout the process.

"Before the time that I presented the complaint in [DATE] and the time that I was told that I should present a formal complaint, more than a year had passed and a lot of damage to my reputation had occurred. I felt that I had not be taken seriously in the beginning."

"They should have at least taught the hygienist how to clean the teeth without letting her hand slip, her hand WAS SLIPPING RIGHT ONTO THE GUMS IN AN UNCONTROLLED WAY."

Communication with CDHO

Experiences with communication during the investigation phase were mixed.

One complainant described their experience positively, noting that the process allowed them to express their concerns clearly. In contrast, another reported a more neutral experience, indicating that while communication occurred, it did not lead to a satisfactory resolution.

These findings suggest that perceptions of communication are closely tied to whether complainants feel their concerns were addressed and resolved.

> *"The investigation process was good for me as it allowed me to express clearly how I perceived the injustice around me, caused by the registrant of the CDHO."*

> *"Too long and useless in the end because they did nothing to correct the wrongs that were done by the hygienist. All I asked for was a corrective action, zero actions were taken."*

Complainant Feedback – Exit Interview(s)

Overall Experience and Process Understanding

The complainant reported overall dissatisfaction with how the complaint was handled, indicating that the process did not provide a sense of closure.

The complaints process was generally perceived as straightforward and well-structured, particularly in terms of submitting documentation.

However, the process took longer than expected, including delays in formally initiating the complaint. While some of this timing reflected the complainant's own pace, the overall duration contributed to frustration.

Despite this, the complainant reported a positive overall impression of CDHO staff and the professionalism of the process.

The complainant did not experience a sense of closure, despite recognizing the professionalism of the process.

"They have a good system in place.... process is well matured."

"I felt like I was not taken seriously."

Communications & Perception of Fairness

The complainant reported a positive experience with CDHC staff, describing interactions as professional, clear, and supportive throughout the process.

Information and resources provided were sufficient, with no additional clarification required.

Timelines were communicated transparently, contributing to perception that the College has a well-structured and effect system in place.

The complainant perceived that the College maintained a neutral and fair position throughout the process.

However, this did not fully translate into a sense of fairness in the experience. While the complainant felt heard by the Complaints Manager, they indicated that the panel did not take their concerns seriously and that the outcome of the investigation was disappointing.

The complainant also reported not fully understanding the reasons for the final decision, contributing to a perception that the process, while neutral, was not entirely fair in outcome.

"They were very professional."

"Robert treats me warmly."

"It gave me enough time to absorb and respond with confidence."

"I think the registrant was told to say and deny certain things by those in the community protecting them."

"The panel did not take into consideration the documentation I sent to them."

Suggestions for Improvement

The complainant indicated they would be willing to submit a complaint again in the future and would recommend the process to others if needed.

At the same time, they noted a willingness to escalate concerns beyond CDHO, including to the Ministry of Health, if they felt the issue was not adequately addressed.

This reflects a level of confidence in the process, alongside expectations for accountability and resolution.

> *"The panel…focus is limited…to teeth and dental hygiene and do not have the experience for complaints."*

Complainant Feedback – Withdrawal Phase

Reason for Complaint Withdrawal

One complainant withdrew their complaint during the 2025–26 period.

The complaint was withdrawn following successful resolution by CDHO, with the complainant indicating that the issue had been addressed and no further action was required.

The complainant also noted that CDHO contacted them regarding their decision to withdraw.

While based on a single case, this highlights the potential for the complaints process to achieve positive outcomes when concerns are effectively addressed.

> *"Successful resolution of the issue thanks to the CDHO."*

> *"The CDHO was helpful and pleasant, and made the process easy to understand. After the CDHO contacted the registrant and helped them understand the issue, the registrant provided a thorough, thoughtful, and well-written response addressing the root cause and describing effective corrective actions…the issue had been resolved, I believed no further action was warranted. I withdrew the complaint…and thanked the College for their time. I feel that the CDHO properly acted to protect the public."*

Key Considerations

Enhancements Implemented

As part of the ongoing evolution of the complaints feedback program, several enhancements have already been implemented to strengthen participation and improve the quality of feedback collected.

- ✓ **Extended data collection time period for exit interviews** - The engagement window has been expanded beyond the initial 30-day invitation to include follow-ups at 45 and 60 days, recognizing that participants may require additional time after receiving a decision.
- ✓ **Implemented phone call follow-up for surveys** - Targeted phone follow-up with non-respondents was introduced to support higher response rates and in result it improve engagement.
- ✓ **Enhanced Reminder Communication –** An additional reminder email has been incorporated beyond the original program design, contributing to improved participation.

Opportunities to Strengthen Feedback Program

The following operational enhancements are proposed to strengthen participation and data collection within the complaints feedback program. **CDHO's review and approval is requested to proceed.**

- **Enable written responses to exit interview questions** - Some participants may prefer to provide written feedback rather than participate in a live interview. Offering this option within outreach communications may improve participation at the disposition stage.
- **Implement registrant consent process during registration/renewal** - Given the emotional context of receiving a complaint, registrants may be less likely to provide consent at the time of engagement. Introducing a proactive consent mechanism during registration or renewal may support increased participation in feedback initiatives.
- **Offer modest, appropriate incentives for exit interviews** - Given the low participation in exit interviews, offering a modest incentive may encourage complainants to take part by acknowledging their time and effort. Incentives should be appropriate for a regulatory context and may include a small-value gift card (e.g., $25–$50) or a charitable donation made on behalf of the participant. This approach can help increase participation at the disposition stage and support more comprehensive insight into the end-to-end complaints experience.

Opportunities to Improve Process Experience

The following considerations are informed by complainant feedback and are intended to strengthen clarity, transparency, and overall experience across the complaints process.

Intake and Complaint Submission - Feedback indicates that while the process is generally accessible, some complainants experienced challenges understanding how to proceed and locating clear information.

- **Provide a clear process overview and expected timelines** on the complaints webpage
- **Include step-by-step guidance on how and when to formally proceed** within intake communications

Investigation Phase - Feedback suggests that delays and uncertainty during the investigation phase impacted the overall experience.

- **Provide clear timelines and expected next steps** at each stage to manage expectations
- **Send standardized updates at key milestones** (e.g., received, under review, decision pending)

Opportunities to Improve Process Experience

Decision, Outcome Communication, and Closure - Feedback suggests that the rationale for the final decision was not always clearly understood, and some complainants did not experience a sense of closure.

- **Enhance decision communications with a plain-language summary** of the outcome and a clear explanation of how the decision was reached and what it means
- **Provide a closing summary and follow-up opportunity**, including a recap of the complaint, outcome, and rationale, and an optional contact point for questions after the decision is issued

Decision-Making Transparency - Feedback suggests that the panel's perspective may have been perceived as limited, affecting confidence in the process.

- **Strengthen transparency of panel composition and roles** by adding a "Who was involved in the decision" section and providing public-facing information on panel expertise
- **Support consistent decision-making and communication** through internal guidance or training for panel members

Thank-you

PIVOTAL RESEARCH Inc.™

Suite 700, 10339 – 124 Street
NW Edmonton, AB T5N 3W1

Contact Information:
E:
info@pivotalresearch.ca
P: 877-421-1199

Pivotal Research respectfully acknowledges that our office is headquartered on the traditional and ancestral land of the Nêhiyawak, Anishinaabe, Niitsitapi, Métis, Dene and Iyãhé Nakoda in Treaty 6 Territory and Métis Region 4.