



College of Physicians and  
Surgeons of British Columbia

Serving the public by regulating physicians and surgeons

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## [Third party requests for information—physicians are obligated to respond promptly \[1\]](#)

The College receives a significant number of complaints, typically from patients, lawyers, and insurers, alleging unacceptable delay in response to third party requests for information such as medico-legal reports and copies of patient records.

In an article published in 2008, [Timely responses to requests for reports](#) [2], the Canadian Medical Protective Association advises that “physicians are ethically and legally obliged to provide reports on patients they have attended.”

For many patients, accessing benefits to pay their bills is at least as important to their well-being as the medical care they receive from their physician. Treating physicians must reserve time in their demanding professional lives to ensure that this important paperwork is completed on time.

The College standard titled [Medical Certificates and Other Third Party Reports](#) [3] obliges physicians to submit reports in a reasonable time frame, usually within 30 business days or less, as circumstances warrant. If physicians are unable to respond promptly, they must communicate directly with the third party and negotiate a new deadline or provide the reasons why they cannot comply. Registrants should be familiar with the expectations contained in this standard.

Frustrated third parties will often turn to the College for assistance and may submit formal complaints, which the College is legally required to investigate. This investigation can be labour intensive, expensive and largely preventable. Physicians who fail to submit timely reports are the cause of significant, needless costs ultimately borne by all College registrants.

The Inquiry Committee takes these matters seriously. A physician with a history of multiple complaints for delinquent provision of reports was recently required to attend the College for an interview, and pay a fine of \$5,000 per current complaint—a total of \$20,000. He was also formally reprimanded.

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[3] <https://www.cpsbc.ca/files/pdf/PSG-Medical-Certificates.pdf>

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