Handling Complaints & Investigations

Every real estate professional must be prepared to both respond to and address complaints—whether from clients, the public, or RECO itself. This section provides a structured approach for managing complaints professionally, ensuring timely responses, and protecting both the agent and the brokerage.

- Responding to a Complaint (RECO, Public, or Internal)
- Submitting a Complaint to RECO

Responding to a Complaint (RECO, Public, or Internal)

Applies To: Sales Representatives, Brokers, Broker of Record, and Managers

Purpose: To ensure that complaints received are addressed professionally, promptly, and in accordance with Century 21 Heritage Group Ltd. policy and RECO’s expectations.

Step 1: Initial Receipt of Complaint

Complaints may come from:

- **RECO**
- **A client or member of the public**
- **Another agent or brokerage**
- **Internal staff or management**

All complaints, regardless of source or tone, must be taken **seriously and without defensiveness**.

Step 2: Notify Management

Immediately forward any complaint to your Manager.

Include:

- The full text of the complaint (email, form, or verbal summary)
- Time and date received
- Any attachments or evidence provided

Do not respond independently. Wait for direction from the designated manager or Broker of Record.

Step 3: Review and Triage

The Broker of Record or designated manager will:

- Assess the complaint for validity and severity
- Determine whether it relates to:
    - Advertising
    - Ethics or professionalism
    - Contractual concerns
    - Regulatory breaches

If the complaint was submitted to **RECO**, follow RECO's response protocol and timelines carefully.

Step 4: Collect Facts & Evidence

The agent(s) involved must:

- Provide a written response (factual and professional)
- Submit relevant documentation (e.g., communications, contracts, ads, logs)
- Disclose any previous related issues or conflicts

Do not delete or alter any communications, advertisements, or online material under review.

Step 5: Response Preparation

The Broker of Record or manager will:

- Draft or review the official response to the complainant or RECO
- Determine if corrective action is needed (e.g., revised ad, apology, compliance training)
- Communicate next steps clearly to the involved agent(s)

Step 6: Corrective Action (If Applicable)

If the complaint reveals a breach or oversight:

- Take immediate corrective action (e.g., remove or amend advertisement)
- Document the change and provide proof to management or RECO
- Complete any retraining or policy review assigned

Step 7: Close and Document the File

Once the complaint is resolved:

- The file is logged in the **Compliance Tracker**
- Any resulting RECO communication is saved

- Agent performance files are updated if applicable

Internal complaints are followed up to ensure the matter is resolved, and trust is rebuilt.

Important Reminders:

- All complaints must be approached **professionally and respectfully**
- Do not speculate, retaliate, or attempt to resolve it publicly
- **Transparency and documentation** protect both the agent and the brokerage
- Silence or delay can escalate the matter — always respond promptly through the correct channels

Submitting a Complaint to RECO

Applies To: Sales Representatives, Brokers, Broker of Record, and Managers

Purpose: To ensure that complaints submitted to the Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO) are handled professionally, internally reviewed, and submitted properly per RECO's regulations.

Step 1: Identify the Issue

The agent must first identify the nature of the complaint:

- Misleading or non-compliant advertising
- Unethical behaviour or professional misconduct
- Breach of TRESA, RECO Code of Ethics, or REBBA guidelines
- Unauthorized representation, false claims, or improper disclosures

The issue must be **documented and evidence-based**.

Step 2: Attempt Internal Resolution

Before involving RECO, agents must make **reasonable efforts** to resolve the matter internally:

- Inform your **Office Manager** or **Broker of Record**

- Attempt professional dialogue with the other agent or their manager (where appropriate)
- Keep written records of all communications and attempted resolutions

Note: RECO requires that brokers or managers attempt resolution before a formal complaint is filed.

Step 3: Escalate to Management

If resolution is not achieved, submit the concern to your Manager

Include:

- A written summary of the issue
- All related evidence (screenshots, ad copies, emails, etc.)
- Documentation of attempted resolution (if any)

The **Broker of Record** or **Designated Manager** will review and determine if it meets the threshold for RECO involvement.

Step 4: Formal Complaint Submission to RECO

Only the **Broker of Record** or **Brokerage Manager** may file the complaint with RECO.

Required Documentation:

- Completed **RECO Advertising Complaint Form** or General Complaint Form
- Supporting evidence

- Proof of attempted internal resolution
- Identification of all involved parties (anonymous complaints are not accepted)

Submit to RECO via:

- Email: registration@reco.on.ca
- Online: www.reco.on.ca (Complaint Portal)

Step 5: Follow-Up

The Broker of Record will monitor and follow up on the complaint as needed.

Agents involved will be updated on:

- Whether the complaint was accepted
- RECO's request for additional information (if applicable)
- Any outcomes or feedback

Important Reminders:

- **Do not file frivolous or retaliatory complaints**—RECO may view this as abuse of process.
- All complaints must be based on **fact and regulation**, not personal disputes.
- RECO decisions are **independent and final**—Century 21 Heritage Group has no control over the outcome.