



Testifying at a Discipline Hearing: A Guide for Witnesses

What is a Discipline Hearing?

A discipline hearing is a formal process similar to a court, where a panel consisting of social workers and social service workers as well as members of the public, hears and considers evidence presented by the College and the member who is the subject of the discipline hearing, before making a decision based on that evidence.

When a matter is referred to the Discipline Committee for a hearing, a College lawyer will be appointed to prosecute the case on behalf of the College. The parties to the hearing are the College and the College member who has been referred to the Discipline Committee.

Why has the College lawyer contacted me about testifying?

You have been asked to share your story at the hearing because you have information that is relevant to the hearing and which may better assist the panel in determining what happened in a given case.

What happens before the hearing?

The College lawyer will contact you in order to go over the information you provided during the investigation. The lawyer will discuss with you the questions that she/he will ask you at the hearing and will also answer any questions you may have so that you are prepared for the hearing.

What happens at the hearing?

College staff will greet you and invite you into the witness room at the College.¹ When it is your turn to testify, you will be called into the hearing room. You will be asked to swear an oath or affirm that you will tell the truth. Thereafter, the College's lawyer will ask you questions and then the member's lawyer will ask additional questions.

Discipline hearings are open to the public unless the Discipline Committee orders that the hearing be closed.

Will my expenses be covered?

Please contact the College's Hearings Office by email at twray@ocswssw.org for more information on how the College deals with witness expenses.

Where will the hearing be held?

Hearings may be held virtually or at the College. The College is located at 250 Bloor St. East, Suite 1000, Toronto. In certain circumstances, the hearing may be held at another location, which will be communicated to you.

¹ If the hearing is virtual, you may be invited into a virtual breakout room to wait until you are called or the Hearings Officer will contact you when it is time to join the hearing room virtually.



Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

Will the College lawyer represent me?

The College lawyer prosecutes the allegations against the registrant. The College lawyer cannot represent you. However, there are resources where you can obtain legal advice for free. Certain conditions may apply:

- **The Law Society of Ontario Lawyer Referral Service** can provide individuals with the name of a lawyer or licensed paralegal who can provide a free consultation of up to 30 minutes to help you determine your rights and options.
- **Pro Bono Ontario** offers a free legal advice hotline at **1-855-255-7256 (toll-free)**.
- **Legal Aid Ontario** – **1-800-668-8258** (toll-free) or at **416-979-1446** if you are calling from Toronto or the GTA.