

Registered Social Workers

SUPPORTING
AND PROTECTING
NEW ZEALAND
COMMUNITIES



**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

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Registration Board**
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Making a
complaint about
the conduct of a
Registered Social Worker:

KEY STEPS IN THE PROCESS

[New Zealand Government](http://www.govt.nz)

All Registered Social Workers in New Zealand are expected to work to a Code of Conduct, which sets the minimum professional standards of behaviour, integrity and conduct that apply across the social work profession. If you feel the service you have received from a social worker has breached the Code of Conduct you may wish to talk directly to the organisation or employer involved, or contact the Social Workers Registration Board.

Further actions you can take:

1. You need to confirm whether the social worker you intend to make a complaint about is registered with the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB). The SWRB office can confirm the status of the social worker (see contact details below). The Register is also publicly available on the SWRB website at www.swrb.org.nz/registersearch.html

2. You will need to set out the grounds for your complaint. Initially this can be done orally or in writing to the Registrar of the SWRB.

3. Your complaint will be promptly acknowledged by the Registrar. (If the complaint is about a social worker who is employed in the provision of a health or disability service, it could be notified or referred to the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner).

4. When a complaint is received the Registrar will immediately notify the Chair of the independent Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal, as per Part 4 of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 covering Discipline (sections 59 to 87).

5. The Chair of the Tribunal will consider the grounds for the complaint and then decide either to:

- not pursue the complaint; or
- refer the complaint to a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC).

6. The process for investigating a complaint against a social worker is very thorough and can take some time. If the complaint is referred to a CAC a determination will be made as to whether:

- the complaint could be resolved through conciliation; or
- the complaint should be submitted to the Tribunal (refer to point 7);
- that no further steps should be taken.

7. If the CAC determines the social worker has breached the Code of Conduct, the complaint will be submitted to the Tribunal as a charge. The Tribunal will hold a hearing, which is likely to be conducted in public. Preceding the hearing the Tribunal may impose restriction of practice in relation to the social worker.

8. Dependent on its final finding the Tribunal may make an order resulting in a penalty against the Registered Social Worker (this would be open to appeal).