



Business - Ensuring Your Business is Strong - How to Prevent Formal Complaints

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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It is difficult if not possible to keep everyone happy. Sometimes clients feel that they have not been treated properly and decide to file a formal complaint. There are several things that you can do to eliminate the risk of this happening as follows:

1. Only offer to provide services in your area of competency. If you do not have expertise in the area that the client is seeking services, provide that person a good referral to another provider.
2. Be sure that the client has Informed Consent. This means that the client knows exactly what you can and will do, the fees and how they are to be paid, limits to confidentiality, as well as understanding of how you can help them.
3. Set clear goals with the client. You cannot "succeed" if you don't know exactly what needs to be accomplished. Often clients come to you without a clear picture of what needs to be resolved. Helping them to lay out the goals is an important part of the treatment plan.
4. Check with the client on a regular basis about the process. If you are truly interested in knowing how the person is doing and provide a safe environment where s/he can be honest, you will be able to make adjustments before there are major problems.
5. Listen to concerns about you or the process in an open manner. Clients can learn from your example and also will feel more comfortable knowing that your desire is to provide services that match their needs.
6. Consult with someone when you do not know how to resolve a situation. Often another perspective (and experience) will help you to consider options that would be helpful.
7. Deal with issues as they occur. Avoiding or procrastinating usually compounds what otherwise might be a simple problem.
8. Be honest. If you have made a mistake, admit it. Apologies are appropriate.
9. Offer to make appropriate referrals if the client no longer chooses to work with you.

Some clients may not be happy with your attempts to deal with issues but if you follow the above steps, you will likely be able to prevent formal complaints from being made against you.

Providing therapy for others involves developing your own expertise in a number of areas. None of us likes to deal with clients who are unhappy with us but if we are open to personal and professional growth opportunities, our skills are honed. If we never face problems, we will never learn how to resolve them in a healthy manner.