



## Someone Filed a Complaint Against Me – Now What?

### A Peek Behind the Curtain

Melanie de Leon, JD, MPA

One of the goals of the WMC is to be as transparent as possible regarding our processes and procedures. Over the next few newsletters, I will explain our major processes so that they are no longer a mystery that seem to be hidden away behind a curtain.

Our enforcement process starts when we receive a complaint against a physician (MD) or physician assistant (PA) licensed by the WMC. Complaints can be filed by *anyone*, from *anywhere*, for *any reason*. Most of our complaints are filed through our website but complaints can be mailed, or hand delivered - we take them all.

Complaint Intake staff reviews all complaints and culls out those that regard a person outside of our jurisdiction (these complaints are referred to other boards/commissions or to facilities for action). Once reviewed, complaints are given a case number and redacted for information that might introduce bias in the reviewing process. Complaint Intake staff do not make any decisions regarding the veracity of the complaint or whether the allegations contained in the complaint should be investigated – those decisions are made by commissioners.

Every week, a panel of at least three commissioners, including one public member, reviews and discusses the complaints processed for that meeting. They decide whether to authorize an investigation or close the complaint without taking any further action.

When a case is closed at this step, both the person who filed the complaint (complainant) and the physician or physician assistant against whom the complaint was filed (respondent) receive a letter notifying them of the closure. At that point, the complainant has the legal right to ask the WMC to reconsider their decision to close the case by providing “new” information with their request. In 2020, we received requests for reconsideration in 3.5% of the complaints closed in this step.

If we receive a request for reconsideration from the complainant, another panel of at least three commissioners reviews the new information and again determines whether to now open an investigation or to keep the complaint closed. In 2020, only two

closure decisions were reversed at this step, initiating an investigation. Again, both the complainant and the respondent are notified of this panel’s decision. If the panel does not authorize an investigation at this point, the complaint remains closed, and the WMC can take no further action.

If the panel authorizes an investigation, the complaint is forwarded to Case Management to assign an investigator and begin the investigation phase.

Next quarter’s article will explain the investigative process.



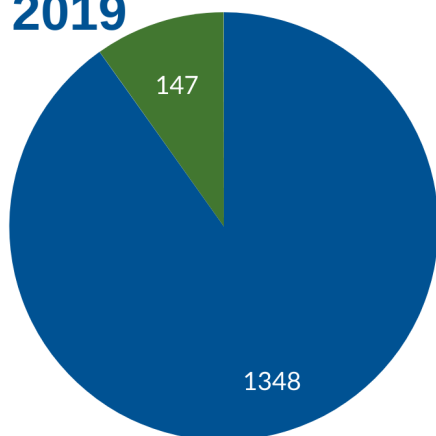
# Complaint Report



**WASHINGTON**  
**Medical**  
**Commission**  
Licensing. Accountability. Leadership.

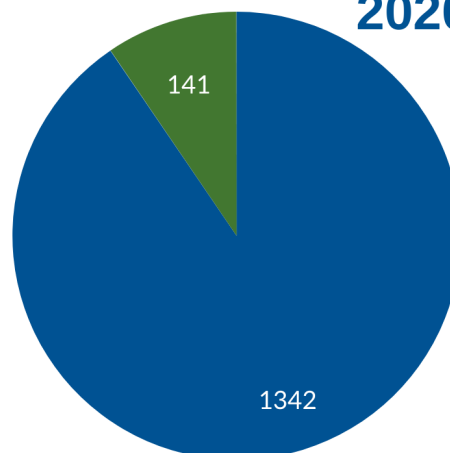
## Number of Complaints Filed

**2019**

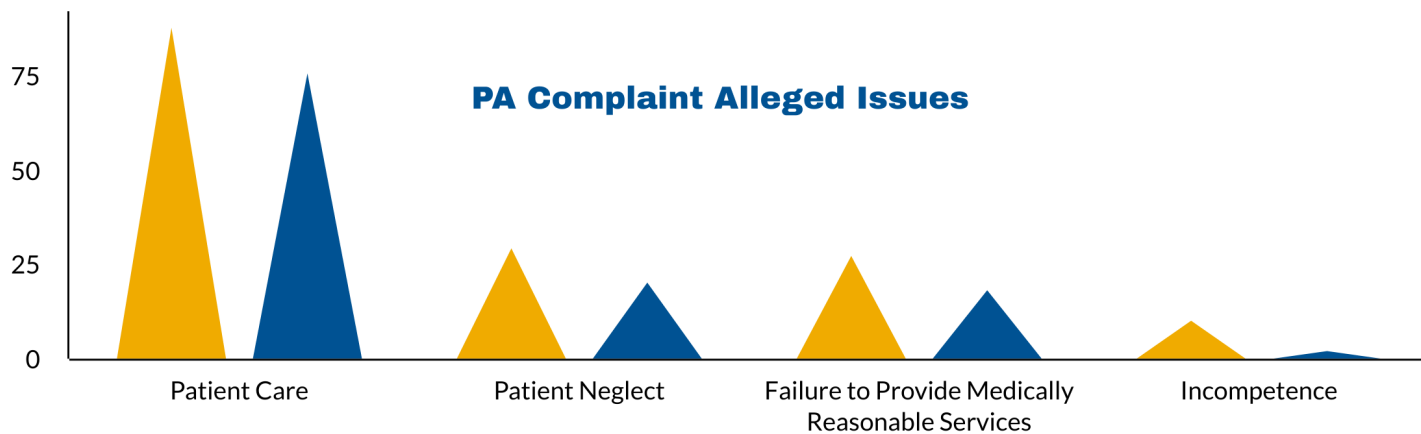
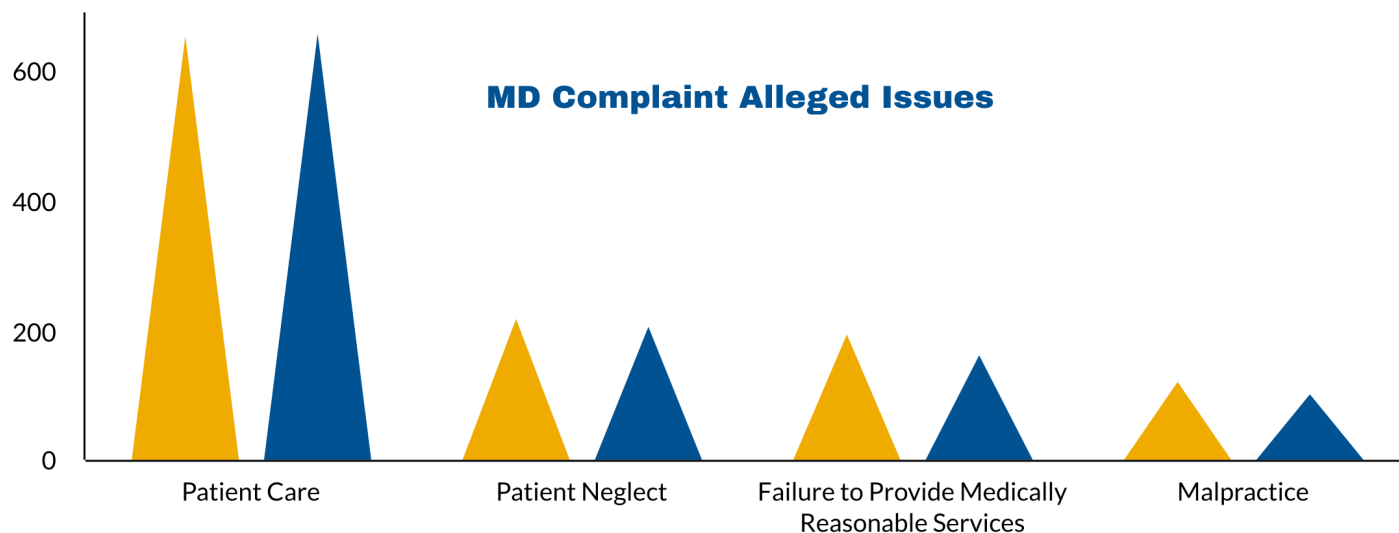


■ Physician (90.17%)  
■ Physician Assistant (9.83%)

**2020**



■ Physician (90.49%)  
■ Physician Assistant (9.51%)



■ 2019 ■ 2020