

CHAPTER 8
INVESTIGATIONS AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

193F—8.1(272C,543D) Disciplinary action. The real estate appraiser examining board has authority pursuant to Iowa Code chapters 543D, 17A and 272C to impose discipline for violations of these Iowa Code chapters and the rules promulgated thereunder.

193F—8.2(17A,272C,543D) Initiation of disciplinary investigations. The board may initiate a licensee disciplinary investigation upon the board's receipt of information suggesting that a licensee may have violated a law or rule enforced by the board which, if true, would constitute grounds for licensee discipline.

193F—8.3(272C,543D) Sources of information. Without limitation, the following nonexclusive list of information sources may form the basis for the initiation of a disciplinary investigation or proceeding:

1. News articles or other media sources.
2. General or random review of publicly available work product.
3. Reports filed with the board by the commissioner of insurance pursuant to Iowa Code subsection 272C.4(9).
4. Complaints filed with the board by any member of the public.
5. License applications or other documents submitted to the board, including appraisal logs and appraisal reports.
6. Reports to the board from any regulatory or law enforcement agency from any jurisdiction.
7. Board audits of licensee compliance with conditions for licensure, such as continuing education or qualifying experience.

193F—8.4(17A,272C,543D) Conflict of interest. If the subject of a complaint is a member of the board, or if a member of the board has a conflict of interest in any disciplinary matter before the board, that member shall abstain from participation in any consideration of the complaint and from participation in any disciplinary hearing that may result from the complaint.

193F—8.5(272C,543D) Complaints. Written complaints may be submitted to the board office by mail, E-mail, facsimile or personal delivery by members of the public, including clients, business organizations, lenders, governmental bodies, licensees, or other individuals or entities with knowledge of possible law or rule violations by licensees.

8.5(1) Contents of a written complaint. Written complaints may be submitted on forms provided by the board that are available from the board office and on the board's Web site. Written complaints, whether submitted on a board complaint form or in other written media, shall contain the following information:

- a. The full name, address, and telephone number of the complainant (person complaining).
- b. The full name, address, and telephone number of the respondent (licensee against whom the complaint is filed).
- c. A statement of the facts and circumstances giving rise to the complaint, including a description of the alleged acts or omissions that the complainant believes demonstrate that the respondent has violated or is violating laws or rules enforced by the board.
- d. If known, citations to the laws or rules allegedly violated by the respondent.
- e. Evidentiary supporting documentation.
- f. Steps, if any, taken by the complainant to resolve the dispute with the respondent prior to filing a complaint.

8.5(2) Immunity. As provided by Iowa Code section 272C.8, a person shall not be civilly liable as a result of filing a report or complaint with the board unless such act is done with malice, nor shall an employee be dismissed from employment or discriminated against by an employer for filing such a report or complaint.

8.5(3) *Role of complainant.* The role of the complainant in the disciplinary process is limited to providing the board with factual information relative to the complaint. A complainant is not party to any disciplinary proceeding which may be initiated by the board based in whole or in part on information provided by the complainant.

8.5(4) *Role of the board.* The board does not act as an arbiter of disputes between private parties, nor does the board initiate disciplinary proceedings to advance the private interest of any person or party. The role of the board in the disciplinary process is to protect the public by investigating complaints and initiating disciplinary proceedings in appropriate cases. The board possesses sole decision-making authority throughout the disciplinary process, including the authority to determine whether a case will be investigated, the manner of the investigation, whether a disciplinary proceeding will be initiated, and the appropriate licensee discipline to be imposed, if any.

8.5(5) *Initial complaint screening.* All written complaints received by the board shall be initially screened by the board's executive officer to determine whether the allegations of the complaint fall within the board's investigatory jurisdiction and whether the facts presented, if true, would constitute a basis for disciplinary action against a licensee. Complaints which are clearly outside the board's jurisdiction, which clearly do not allege facts upon which disciplinary action would be based, or which are frivolous shall be referred by the board's executive officer to the board for closure at the next scheduled board meeting. All other complaints shall be referred by the board's executive officer to the board's disciplinary committee for committee review as described in subrule 8.8(1).

193F—8.6(272C,543D) Case numbers. Whether based on written complaint received by the board or complaint initiated by the board, all complaint files shall be tracked by a case numbering system. Complaints are assigned case numbers in chronological order with the first two digits representing the year in which the complaint was received or initiated, and the second two digits representing the order in which the case file was opened (e.g., 01-01, 01-02, 01-03, etc.). The board's executive officer shall maintain a case file log noting the date each case file was opened, whether disciplinary proceedings were initiated in the case, and the final disposition of the case. Once a case file number is assigned to a complaint, all persons communicating with the board regarding that complaint are encouraged to include the case file number to facilitate accurate records and prompt response.

193F—8.7(272C,543D) Confidentiality of complaint and investigative information. All complaint and investigative information received or created by the board is privileged and confidential pursuant to Iowa Code subsection 272C.6(4). Such information shall not be released to any person except as provided in that section.

193F—8.8(17A,272C,543D) Investigation procedures.

8.8(1) *Disciplinary committee.* The board chairperson shall annually appoint two to three members of the board to serve on the board's disciplinary committee. The disciplinary committee is a purely advisory body which shall review complaint files referred by the board's executive officer, generally supervise the investigation of complaints, and make recommendations to the full board on the disposition of complaints. Members of the committee shall not personally investigate complaints, but they may review the investigative work product of others in formulating recommendations to the board.

8.8(2) *Committee screening of complaints.* Upon the referral of a complaint from the board's executive officer or from the full board, the committee shall determine whether the complaint presents facts which, if true, suggest that a licensee may have violated a law or rule enforced by the board. If the committee concludes that the complaint does not present facts which suggest such a violation or that the complaint does not otherwise constitute an appropriate basis for disciplinary action, the committee shall refer the complaint to the full board with the recommendation that the complaint be closed with no further action. If the committee determines that the complaint does present a credible basis for disciplinary action, the committee may either immediately refer the complaint to the full board recommending that a disciplinary proceeding be commenced or initiate a disciplinary investigation.

8.8(3) *Committee procedures.* If the committee determines that additional information is necessary or desirable to evaluate the merits of a complaint, the committee may assign an investigator or expert consultant, appoint a peer review committee, provide the licensee an opportunity to appear before the disciplinary committee for an informal discussion as described in rule 193F—8.9(17A,272C,543D) or request board staff to conduct further investigation. Upon completion of an investigation, the investigator, expert consultant, peer review committee or board staff shall present a report to the committee. The committee shall review the report and determine what further action is necessary. The committee may:

- a. Request further investigation.
- b. Determine there is not probable cause to believe a disciplinary violation has occurred, and refer the case to the full board with the recommendation of closure.
- c. Determine there is probable cause to believe that a law or rule enforced by the board has been violated, but that disciplinary action is unwarranted on other grounds, and refer the case to the full board with the recommendation of closure. The committee may also recommend that the licensee be informally cautioned or educated about matters which could form the basis for disciplinary action in the future.
- d. Determine there is probable cause to believe a disciplinary violation has occurred, and refer the case to the full board with the recommendation that the board initiate a disciplinary proceeding (contested case).

8.8(4) *Subpoena authority.* Pursuant to Iowa Code subsections 17A.13(1) and 272C.6(3), the board is authorized in connection with a disciplinary investigation to issue subpoenas to compel witnesses to testify or persons to produce books, papers, records and any other real evidence, whether or not privileged or confidential under law, which the board deems necessary as evidence in connection with a disciplinary proceeding or relevant to the decision about whether to initiate a disciplinary proceeding. Board procedures concerning investigative subpoenas are set forth in 193—Chapter 6.

193F—8.9(17A,272C,543D) Informal discussion. If the disciplinary committee considers it advisable, or if requested by the affected licensee, the committee may grant the licensee any opportunity to appear before the committee for a voluntary informal discussion of the facts and circumstances of an alleged violation, subject to the provisions of this rule.

8.9(1) An informal discussion is intended to provide a licensee an opportunity to share in an informal setting the licensee's side of a complaint before the board determines whether probable cause exists to initiate a disciplinary proceeding. Licensees are not required to attend an informal discussion. Because disciplinary investigations are confidential, licensees may not bring other persons with them to an informal discussion, but licensees may be represented by legal counsel.

8.9(2) Unless disqualification is waived by the licensee, board members or staff who personally investigate a disciplinary complaint are disqualified from making decisions or assisting the decision makers at a later formal hearing. Because board members generally rely upon investigators, peer review committees, or expert consultants to conduct investigations, the issue rarely arises. An informal discussion, however, is a form of investigation because it is conducted in a question and answer format. In order to preserve the ability of all board members to participate in board decision making and to receive the advice of staff, licensees who desire to attend an informal discussion must therefore waive their right to seek disqualification of a board member or staff based solely on the board member's or staff's participation in an informal discussion. Licensees would not be waiving their right to seek disqualification on any other ground. By electing to attend an informal discussion, a licensee accordingly agrees that participating board members or staff are not disqualified from acting as a presiding officer in a later contested case proceeding or from advising the decision maker.

8.9(3) Because an informal discussion constitutes a part of the board's investigation of a pending disciplinary case, the facts discussed at the informal discussion may be considered by the board in the event the matter proceeds to a contested case hearing and those facts are independently introduced into evidence.

8.9(4) The disciplinary committee, subject to board approval, may propose a consent order at the time of the informal discussion. If the licensee agrees to a consent order, a statement of charges shall be filed simultaneously with the consent order, as provided in rule 193—7.4(17A,272C).

193F—8.10(272C,543D) Peer review committee (PRC). A peer review committee may be appointed by the board to investigate a complaint. The committee may consist of one or more certified general or certified residential real property appraisers registered to practice in Iowa. The board may appoint a single peer review consultant to perform the functions of a PRC when, in the board's opinion, appointing a committee with more members would be impractical, unnecessary or undesirable given the nature of the expertise required, the need for prompt action or the circumstances of the complaint. An individual shall be ineligible as a PRC member in accordance with the standard for disqualification found in 193—7.14(17A).

8.10(1) Authority. The PRC investigation may include activities such as interviewing the complainant, the respondent, and individuals with knowledge of the respondent's practice in the community; gathering documents; and performing independent analyses as deemed necessary. The board may give specific instructions to the PRC regarding the scope of the investigation. In the course of the investigation, PRC members shall refrain from advising the complainant or respondent on actions that the board might take.

8.10(2) Term of service. The PRC serves at the pleasure of the board. The board may dismiss any or all members of a PRC or add new members at any time.

8.10(3) Compensation. PRC members may receive compensation as the board may provide by contract. Within established budget limitations, PRC members may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses that are incurred for travel, meals and lodging while performing committee duties. The PRC shall not hire legal counsel, investigators, secretarial help or any other assistance without written authorization from the board.

8.10(4) Reports. Each PRC shall submit a written report to the board within a reasonable period of time.

8.10(5) Components of the report. The report shall include:

- a. Statement of the charge to the PRC;
- b. Description of the actions taken by the PRC in its investigation, including but not limited to appraisal review(s) and interviews with the respondent or complainant;
- c. Summary of the PRC's findings, including the PRC's opinion as to whether a violation occurred, citation of the specific USPAP violation(s), citation of the Iowa Code section(s) and Iowa Administrative Code rule(s) violated, and the PRC's opinion of the seriousness of the violation;
- d. Recommendation.

8.10(6) Recommended action. The PRC report shall recommend one of the following:

- a. Dismissal of the complaint;
- b. Further investigation;
- c. Disciplinary proceedings;
- d. Allowing the appraiser who is the subject of the complaint an opportunity to appear before the board for an informal discussion regarding the circumstances of the alleged violation.

If the PRC recommends further investigation or disciplinary proceedings, supporting information must be submitted to the board including citation of the specific USPAP violation(s), Iowa Code section(s) and Iowa Administrative Code rule(s) violated.

8.10(7) Disciplinary recommendations. When recommending disciplinary proceedings, a PRC shall refrain from suggesting a particular form of discipline, but may provide guidance on the severity of the violations that prompted the recommendation and may identify professional areas in which the appraiser needs additional education or supervision in order to safely practice.

8.10(8) Confidentiality. The PRC shall not discuss its findings and conclusions with any party to the complaint other than the board (through its report to the board) or board staff. PRC findings including the name of the complainant shall be kept confidential at all times. PRC findings shall be used only

for the purposes of the board's possible disciplinary action and not for any other court case, lawsuit, or investigation.

8.10(9) Testimony. In the event of formal disciplinary proceedings, PRC members may be required to testify.

193F—8.11(17A,272C,543D) Closing complaint files.

8.11(1) Grounds for closing. Upon the recommendation of the executive officer, the recommendation of the disciplinary committee, or on its own motion, the board may close a complaint file, with or without prior investigation. Given the broad scope of matters about which members of the public may complain, it is not possible to catalog all possible reasons why the board may close a complaint file. The following nonexclusive list is, however, illustrative of the grounds upon which the board may close a complaint file:

- a. The complaint alleges matters outside the board's jurisdiction.
- b. The complaint does not allege a reasonable or credible basis to believe that the subject of the complaint violated a law or rule enforced by the board.
- c. The complaint is frivolous or trivial.
- d. The complaint alleges matters more appropriately resolved in a different forum, such as civil litigation to resolve a contract dispute, or more appropriately addressed by alternative procedures, such as outreach education or rule making.
- e. The matters raised in the complaint are situational, isolated, or unrepresentative of a licensee's typical practice, and the licensee has taken appropriate steps to ensure future compliance and prevent public injury.
- f. Resources are unavailable or better directed to other complaints or board initiatives in light of the board's overall budget and mission.
- g. While the evidence may reveal one or more appraisal standards about which the appraiser should be more vigilant in the future, the issues appear correctable, are not likely to recur with proper diligence in the development and reporting of future appraisals, and do not reveal impediments to competent practice in the future.
- h. Other extenuating factors exist which weigh against the imposition of public discipline when considered in the context of the board's purpose and mission.

8.11(2) Closing orders. The board's executive officer may enter an order stating the basis for the board's decision to close a complaint file. If entered, the order shall not contain the identity of the complainant or the respondent and shall not disclose confidential complaint or investigative information.

If entered, a closing order will be indexed by case number and shall be a public record pursuant to Iowa Code subsection 17.3(1) "d." A copy of the order may be mailed to the complainant, if any, and to the respondent. The board's decision whether or not to pursue an investigation, to institute disciplinary proceedings, or to close a file is not subject to judicial review.

8.11(3) Cautionary letters. The board may issue a confidential letter of caution to a licensee when a complaint file is closed which informally cautions or educates the licensee about matters which could form the basis for disciplinary action in the future if corrective action is not taken by the licensee. Informal cautionary letters do not constitute disciplinary action, but the board may take such letters into consideration in the future if a licensee continues a practice about which the licensee has been cautioned.

8.11(4) Reopening closed complaint files. The board may reopen a closed complaint file if additional information arises after closure which provides a basis to reassess the merits of the initial complaint.

193F—8.12(17A,272C,543D) Initiation of disciplinary proceedings. Disciplinary proceedings may only be initiated by the affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the board at a public meeting. Board members who are disqualified shall not be included in determining whether a quorum exists. If, for example, two members of the board are disqualified, three members of the board shall constitute a quorum of the remaining five board members for purposes of voting on the case in which the two members are disqualified. When three or more members of the board are disqualified or otherwise unavailable for any reason, the executive officer may request the special appointment of one or more

substitute board members pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.11, subsection 5. Discipline may only be imposed against a licensee by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the board who are not disqualified.

193F—8.13(17A,272C,543D) Disciplinary contested case procedures. Unless in conflict with a provision of board rules in this chapter, all of the procedures set forth in 193—Chapter 7 shall apply to disciplinary contested cases initiated by the board.

193F—8.14(543D) Decisions. The board shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law, and may take one or more of the following actions:

1. Dismiss the charges;
2. Suspend or revoke the appraiser's certification or associate's registration as authorized by law;
3. Impose civil penalties, the amount which shall be set at the discretion of the board, but which shall not exceed \$1000 per violation. Civil penalties may be imposed for any of the disciplinary violations specified in Iowa Code section 543D.17 and chapter 272C or for any repeat offenses;
4. Impose a period of probation, either with or without conditions;
5. Require reexamination;
6. Require additional professional education, reeducation, or continuing education;
7. Issue a citation and a warning;
8. Require desk review of the appraiser's work product;
9. Issue a consent order;
10. Impose any other form of discipline authorized by a provision of law that the board, in its discretion, believes is warranted under the circumstances of the case.

193F—8.15(543D) Civil penalties. Factors the board may consider when determining whether and in what amount to assess civil penalties include:

1. Whether other forms of discipline are being imposed for the same violation;
2. Whether the amount imposed will be a substantial economic deterrent to the violation;
3. The circumstances leading to the violation;
4. The severity of the violation and the risk of harm to the public;
5. The economic benefits gained by the appraiser as a result of the violation;
6. The interest of the public;
7. Evidence of reform or remedial action;
8. Time elapsed since the violation occurred;
9. Whether the violation is a repeat offense following a prior cautionary letter, disciplinary order, or other notice of the nature of the infraction;
10. The clarity of the issue involved;
11. Whether the violation was willful and intentional;
12. Whether the appraiser acted in bad faith;
13. The extent to which the appraiser cooperated with the board;
14. Whether the appraiser practiced appraising with a lapsed, suspended or revoked certificate or registration.

193F—8.16(272C,543D) Voluntary surrender. The board may accept the voluntary surrender of a license to resolve a pending disciplinary contested case or pending disciplinary investigation. The board shall not accept a voluntary surrender of a license to resolve a pending disciplinary investigation unless a statement of charges is filed along with the order accepting the voluntary surrender. Such voluntary surrender is considered disciplinary action and shall be published in the same manner as is applicable to any other form of disciplinary order.

193F—8.17(272C,543D) Reinstatement. In addition to the provisions of rule 193—7.38(17A,272C), the following provisions shall apply to license reinstatement proceedings:

8.17(1) The board may grant an applicant's request to appear informally before the board prior to the issuance of a notice of hearing on an application to reinstate if the applicant requests an informal appearance in the application and agrees not to seek to disqualify, on the ground of personal investigation, board members or staff before whom the applicant appears.

8.17(2) An order granting an application for reinstatement may impose such terms and conditions as the board deems desirable, which may include one or more of the types of disciplinary sanctions described in rule 193F—8.14(543D).

8.17(3) The board shall not grant an application for reinstatement when the initial order which revoked, suspended or restricted the license, denied license renewal, or accepted a voluntary surrender was based on a criminal conviction and the applicant cannot demonstrate to the board's satisfaction that:

- a.* All terms of the sentencing or other criminal order have been fully satisfied;
- b.* The applicant has been released from confinement and any applicable probation or parole; and
- c.* Restitution has been made or is reasonably in the process of being made to any victims of the crime.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 543D.5, 543D.17 and 543D.18 and chapters 17A and 272C.

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