



# ANNUAL REPORT

EMA LICENSING BOARD



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health  
Room 337 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

On behalf of the Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board (the “Board”), I am pleased to present you with our 2022-2023 Annual Report, in accordance with the *Emergency Health Services Act*, section 6(8).

The 2022-2023 reporting period, although active, was markedly more settled than the previous year. This past year saw the positive impacts on emergency health services of increased COVID-19 vaccination rates across the province and fewer extraordinary weather events, although record-breaking overdose deaths continue to affect Emergency Medical Assistants (EMA) in their day-to-day work. EMAs will undoubtedly continue to play an important role in health care as ongoing challenges throughout the system persist and evolve.

Early in 2022, the Board and branch worked collaboratively with our Ministry colleagues within Professional Regulation to finalize the language in the scope of practice regulation changes to ensure it accurately reflected the Board’s intention of the recommendations made to the Minister. The Board and branch also met with training agencies and other impacted groups in early 2022 in anticipation of the Ministerial Order. The intention of these meetings was to prospectively answer questions and ensure training agencies and employers had the information required to operationalize the regulations once the scope changes came into effect. The branch communicated with all licensed EMAs advising them of the changes and confirmed the necessity of their successful completion of recognized training before their licenses would be updated to include the new services. A frequently asked questions document was posted to the Board’s website and is updated as new scope change questions arise. Engagement activity continues with EMAs, training agencies, and employers as we look ahead to the end of the transition period in September 2024.

The supply shortage of EMAs, as with other healthcare professionals, continued throughout this year. The Board and branch have been working with EMA employers to develop policy alternatives to licence EMAs more expeditiously without compromising patient safety.

The Board is grateful for the opportunity to provide this comprehensive overview of the 2022-2023 work of the EMA Licensing Board and branch in its regulation of over 15,000 licensees. The Board is available to meet at your convenience to discuss this report and to continue the discussion regarding the modernization of EMA regulation initiated over the last two years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Sinden".

Ryan Sinden  
Chair  
Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board



# MESSAGE FROM THE REGISTRAR

The Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health  
Room 337 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

On behalf of the Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Branch (the “branch”), I am pleased to contribute to this Annual Report of the Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board (the “Board”) for the reporting period ending March 31, 2023.

I assumed the role of Acting Director and Registrar in November 2022 and I am delighted to be part of such a dedicated and hard-working team. Since that time, I have been working with our team, healthcare partners and rightsholders to familiarize myself with the work of the branch and the Board, and our role in the larger context of the healthcare system.

In the first half of the reporting period the branch supported the Board by coordinating the consultation and engagement process with major interested parties towards finalization of the regulation language. During this period, the branch also continued the work of examining and licensing EMAs, while simultaneously working to evolve our policies, processes, and methodologies to accommodate increasing volumes of candidates wanting to serve as part of our provincial healthcare system.

In early fall of 2022, the branch initiated a request for proposal for secondary investigation services in support of the Board’s complaints process. The goal of this undertaking was to increase capacity, expertise, and timeliness in addressing complaints. We are pleased to report that these outcomes are being realized with a 50 percent increase in secondary investigations completed since the contract was implemented.

Preparation for the operational impacts of the EMA scope of practice expansion, as well as positioning the branch to meet the needs of an evolving workforce has not been without challenges. However, we face these challenges with patient safety as our top priority. We have developed a staffing plan to address long-standing shortages and to manage the increase in training programs requiring reviews for Board recognition, and EMAs requiring examinations and licensing following the regulated scope of practice increases.

With the support of the Ministry of Health and our partners in the training and service delivery arms of the profession, we continue to support the Board as we strive to advance the profession of paramedicine and pre-hospital care in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'WVowles', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wendy Vowles  
Director and Registrar  
EMA Licensing Branch



## THE EMA LICENSING BOARD

### **RYAN SINDEN, PCP, BBA, CHAIR**



Ryan Sinden works in both the fire service and BCEHS. Ryan started his full-time firefighting career in 2006. Within the fire service Ryan has and continues to be involved in many different specialty teams including high angle and confined space rescue, urban search and rescue, trench rescue, vehicle extrication, and water/ice rescue. Ryan has also been active in the private sector developing and teaching courses and providing contract rescue services in industry.

Ryan's career in paramedicine started in 2007 with BCEHS as a primary care paramedic. Working in the Okanagan, Whistler, and the Metro Vancouver area for the last number of years, Ryan has enjoyed experiencing the variety in service delivery that comes with different areas. Ryan's interest in training and education continued with his position as an instructor with the Justice Institute starting in 2008 where he teaches the PCP program.

In 2017, Ryan accepted a role with BCEHS Learning as a clinical educator. Ryan currently teaches various continuing education courses offered to BCEHS paramedics. Continuing education is important to Ryan leading him to complete his diploma in EMS from the Justice Institute in 2015, an Honours Degree in Business Administration from Simon Fraser University in 2016, and Ryan is currently working on his Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the University of British Columbia with completion expected in December 2023.

Ryan was appointed to the Board April 27, 2020, and was reappointed in April of 2021 to December 31, 2023.

### **DR. PHILIP YOON, MD, MBA, VICE CHAIR**



Dr. Yoon is a staff emergency physician at the Royal Columbian and Eagle Ridge Hospitals and is a Clinical Professor within the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of British Columbia. He completed his medical and business administration training at the University of Alberta and has been in active emergency medicine practice for over 25 years.

Dr. Yoon has worked in clinical, administrative, educational and research roles in emergency medicine and EMS in Alberta, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia. He maintains a clinical and academic interest in pre-hospital and transport medicine and other areas related to medicine in austere environments.

Dr. Yoon also serves as a Navy Reserve Medical Officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. Since 2013, he has held the position of a Medical Director within British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) and has held portfolios involving the EMS Physician Online Support service and the Clinical Hub.

Dr. Yoon was appointed to the Board in November 2012 and reappointed in December 2022 to a term ending December 31, 2024.

## **GRANT ROSS, MEMBER**



Grant Ross is a career paramedic, working for the British Columbia Ambulance Service since 1987. Starting as a Primary Care Paramedic in the Vancouver post, he obtained his Advanced Care Paramedic certification in 2006 and then completed his Critical Care/Flight Paramedic training in 2014. He is currently working at the Vancouver Airevac station. Throughout his career, Grant has contributed to the professional development of his peers as a preceptor, mentor, and field trainer at all paramedic levels.

In addition to patient care delivery, for the last 25 years, Grant has volunteered for the Paramedic Association of Canada and the Ambulance Paramedics of BC writing, reviewing, and revising the corporate bylaws. He is also the Chair of the Paramedic Association's Benevolent Committee. This committee is tasked with providing support to families of paramedics killed in the line of duty.

Grant is the Past President and founding Board member of the Canadian Paramedic Memorial Foundation, a registered charity seeking to build a national monument in Ottawa to showcase paramedicine and pay respect to fallen Canadian paramedics.

Grant was appointed to the Board on December 31, 2018, and reappointed in December 2022 to a term ending December 31, 2024.



## BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board's mandate is to ensure all Emergency Medical Assistants (EMAs) in British Columbia comply with the *Emergency Health Services Act* and the Emergency Medical Assistants Regulation. This provides assurance to the public that competent, consistent, and appropriate care will be available during medical emergencies and inter-facility patient transfers.

The Board is empowered under *the Act* to examine, register and licence EMAs to practice in British Columbia, to set licence terms and conditions, and to investigate complaints. Annual continuing competence requirements are enforced by the Director, and individuals are directed to the Board as necessary to ensure licensees maintain a high standard of patient care.

The Board reviews and recommends legislative and regulatory changes to the Minister of Health, liaises with other out-of-hospital care bodies, and maintains collaborative relationships with rightsholders across the health sector.

## BOARD COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

The Investigations Committee was appointed by the Board and acted independently to assist the Board in assessing patient care complaints. For the majority of 2022-2023, there was a six-person Investigations Committee consisting of a Chair, who is an emergency physician, four paramedics, and one first responder. This Committee conducted investigations and reported their findings to the Board.

In the fall of 2022, the branch conducted a request for proposal process to establish a contract for investigations services. The successful proponent commenced services in November 2022. Initial investigations are conducted by the branch Board Officers and, when necessary, secondary investigations are conducted by the external service. The use of an investigations service is intended to build investigations capacity and to improve timeliness. The former Investigations Committee Chair continues to review patient care complaints when clinical expertise warrants their involvement.





# THE EMA LICENSING BRANCH

The Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Branch provides administrative support to the Board. The branch is funded and staffed by the Ministry of Health.

The Director, who also serves as the Registrar, provides leadership and direction regarding branch operational deliverables including examinations, licensure and registration, management of the continuing competence program, facilitation of training program review and recognition, and the receipt and preliminary investigation of patient care complaints. The Director ensures that all Board and branch activities are consistent with the Board's and Ministry's legislative authority and strategic direction.

During 2022-2023, the Branch added three new permanent, full-time positions; a Board Officer to facilitate patient care complaints, an Examination Administrator, and an Examination Coordinator to facilitate practical examinations throughout British Columbia. The branch will be expanding the licensing team during 2023-2024 to increase the capacity in the licensing process as EMAs receive training to remove restrictions and add endorsements resulting from the 2022 regulation changes.

## POLICIES AND POSITIONS



The Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board approves policy within its legal authority under the *Emergency Health Services Act* and *Emergency Medical Assistants Regulation*. In alignment with best practice, the Board publishes all policies on its [website](#) and all policies are reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

### FIRST RESPONDER CHALLENGE POLICY

In March 2023, the Board approved a new policy to allow Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) licence applicants undergoing licensing examinations to challenge the EMA First Responder (EMA FR) exams. If successful, applicants would be eligible for an EMA FR licence to allow them to seek employment while awaiting an EMR practical exam. The purpose of the policy is to increase flexibility in the pathways to licensure without compromising standards for practitioner competency and patient safety.

## **P O L I C Y   U P D A T E S**

The Out of Province Assessment Policy was updated in July 2022, to include a pathway to licensure for international health practitioners with emergency medicine skills and experience to have their training, education, and experience assessed. Applicants that are deemed equivalent to an EMA in British Columbia, are required to complete the examination requirements to be eligible for licensure. The successful completion of the examinations demonstrates that the skills, knowledge, and abilities of their profession translate to their ability to practice safely and competently as an EMA in British Columbia.

The Examination Order Requirements for Emergency Medical Responders Policy requires EMR candidates to complete their written and jurisprudence examinations before being scheduled to attend a practical examination. The purpose of this policy is to reduce cancellations and no shows at practical examinations and to ensure practical examination spaces are available to those intent on completing the licensing process. This policy was revoked in 2019 and due to excessive cancellations and no shows by EMR candidates, was reinstated in September 2022.

The EMA FR Initial and Renewal Licence Requirements Policy was updated in December 2022 to remove the Jurisprudence exam requirement for EMA FR licence renewals. The purpose of this was to streamline the licence renewal requirements for EMA FRs and align their jurisprudence exam requirements with other licence categories.

## **P O S I T I O N   S T A T E M E N T S**

In June 2022, the Board issued a [position statement](#) on EMA conduct in crisis. The purpose of the statement is to acknowledge the difficult circumstances that EMAs can find themselves in during extraordinary events within a constrained public health system, and to confirm the Board's intention to consider the EMA's clinical care within the context of those constraints.

In January 2023, the Board issued a [position statement](#) on training. This position was provided to training institutions to confirm that the Board's authority is limited to training program recognition as per the EMA Regulation. Programs are reviewed through this lens to ensure candidates are prepared for licensing examinations.



## PROJECTS

### EMA REGULATION CHANGES

In July 2021, the Minister requested the Board provide recommendations for EMA scope expansion. The Minister accepted the Board's recommendations and signed a Ministerial Order in September 2022.

The branch communicated with all licensed EMAs advising them of the changes to their scope of practice and the need for them to successfully complete recognized training before they will be licensed to perform their enhanced scope. A [frequently asked questions](#) document was posted to the Board's website and is updated as new scope change questions arise.

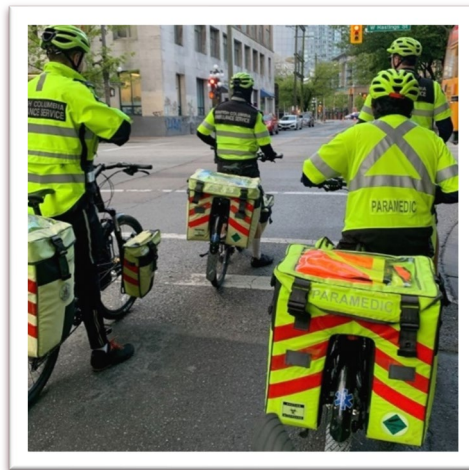


Photo Credit: BCEHS

In early 2023 the branch began receiving training submissions that address scope increase services and as programs are recognized by the Board, they are available to EMAs to support their training needs. The rate with which the branch is receiving training submissions is increasing and the Board is optimistic that many EMAs will be trained in the new services prior to the end of the transition period.

### EXAM QUALITY CONTROL PROJECT

This project was initiated in December 2021 and is scheduled for completion at the end of 2023-2024. The purpose of the project is to ensure practical examinations are conducted in a consistent and effective manner and to enable examiners to exam with confidence and consistently apply the marking criteria across all candidates to ensure prospective EMAs are assessed competently and fairly. The project will achieve this through the development of examiner supports including assessment tools, the implementation of a sustainable exam bank management strategy, and a strategy for the ongoing adoption of technology to improve exam efficiency for examiners, candidates, and branch members.

Effective April 1, 2022, the Board adopted a new marking rubric, updated examinations, and updated the examination guidelines to ensure consistency at practical examinations. The Branch also piloted the video recording of practical examinations in February and March of 2023 and effective April 2023, all practical exams conducted will be recorded to promote consistency, transparency, and fairness in practice.

## **JURISPRUDENCE EXAM REVISION**

Based on feedback received from interested parties during 2022, the jurisprudence examination was simplified. The revised jurisprudence exam was launched in February 2023 and is comprised of 25 multiple choice and true/false questions. Direct links were added to each question to ensure exam candidates access the correct legislation or policy to which the question refers.

## **CONTINUING COMPETENCE PROJECT**

Continuing competence has been an annual requirement since 2011 and is embedded in the EMA Regulation under [Part 4](#). The current policy was last updated in 2017. Based on feedback, a review of the continuing competence policy was initiated in the final quarter of the previous year. A jurisdictional scan was conducted focusing on paramedics in Canadian provinces and the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as a review of other BC healthcare professionals. BC EMAs were surveyed to gather feedback regarding the existing continuing competence policy. A findings report captured the results of the jurisdictional scan and the survey.

The goal of the project was to maintain public safety and practitioner accountability while providing greater flexibility for EMAs in selecting educational activities and greater predictability in the credits they will receive for those activities. Following engagement with impacted parties, the revised continuing competence policy came into effect on April 1, 2023.

## **FIRST RESPONDER WORKING GROUP**

The Board Chair initiated the First Responder Working Group for the purpose of achieving alignment between training, written and practical examinations, and practice. Working group members include representatives of the Board, branch, and FR training institutions. During this reporting period, the working group took a collaborative approach to developing learning objectives for each EMA Regulation Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 service. Early in 2023-2024, the learning objectives will be distributed for feedback to all FR training institutions with recognized programs and the same collaborative approach will be employed in the development of a revised written exam bank of questions.

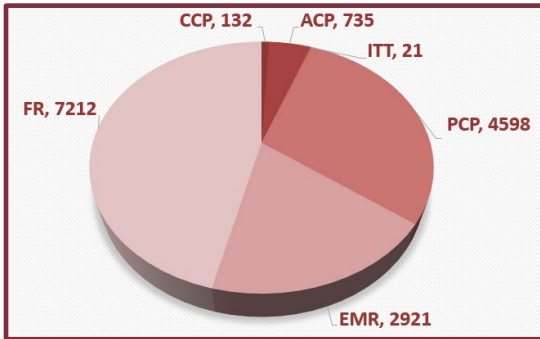


Photo Credit: Dean Kwasny  
Mill Bay Fire Department

# RESULTS FROM LAST YEAR

## EMAS BY LICENCE CATEGORY

On March 31, 2023, there were 15,619 EMAs licensed to practice in BC. This represents an increase of 256 over the previous year. In BC, First Responders (FR) represent the largest number of EMAs at 46 percent, a 2 percent decrease over last year. The representation by BC EMA licence category with changes over last year is:



- FR 7,212 (-227)
- Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) 2,921 (+242)
- Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) 4,598 (+171)
- Infant Transport Team (ITT) 21 (-2)
- Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) 735 (+77)
- Critical Care Paramedic (CCP) 132 (-5)

The decrease in FR and increase in EMR is a trend that has continued over the last several years and is the result of an

increasing number of larger fire departments licensing EMAs at the EMR level. The number of ITT licence holders continues in an expected decline as there are no longer recognized training programs available for this licence category and new team members are trained and licensed at the higher license category of Critical Care Paramedic.

## WHERE EMAS WORK

The majority of EMAs are First Responders who work as fire fighters or fire rescue personnel providing emergency services such as scene assessment, CPR, and wound and fracture management until higher level licensees arrive on the scene. Emergency Medical Responders provide basic life-saving emergency medical care, typically in rural and remote areas or for large, urban fire departments. Primary Care Paramedics provide more advanced patient care, encompass most BC paramedics, and work throughout the province. Advanced Care Paramedics specialize in advanced care of medical and trauma patients including advanced cardiac care. Critical Care Paramedics (CCP) specialize in critical care services including critically ill and/or injured patient inter-facility transport and air medical response. CCPs, as well as Infant Transport Team paramedics, specialize in the critical care of high-risk maternity, neo-natal and pediatric patients. The figures to the left indicate self-reported EMA employment categories. The total number of licensees by employer is higher (16,737) than the number of licensees (15,619) because many EMAs have more than one employer.

Employer	No. of EMAs
Fire Department	8,232
Ambulance Service	4,353
No Employer*	2,050
Industry	1,510
Employed Outside BC	178
Military	157
Ski Resort	83
Search and Rescue	55
Patient Transport Service	46
Municipal Government	28
Police Department	18
Health Authority	16
BC Government**	8
Training Agency	3

\* Indicates EMAs who are not employed or who have not provided their employer to EMALB despite their regulatory obligation to do so

\*\*Includes members of EMALB

# EXAMINATIONS:

## WRITTEN EXAMS

There were 945 written examinations completed during 2022-2023, a 44 percent increase over the previous year. As with practical examinations, written exams are primarily written by candidates who are applying for an initial licence or a new licence level (914). The remainder wrote to reinstate a licence (19), as the result of a hearing (1) or a continuing competence requirement (9) and the remaining two were international applicants.

EMA FRs write an exam every three years to renew their licenses in lieu of continuing competence requirements. This resulted in 1,427 EMA FRs writing renewal exams this year. In addition, 1,025 examinations were written as a requirement to obtain a new EMA FR licence, and 521 for reinstating an expired licence.

## PRACTICAL EXAMS

The Branch conducted 48 scheduled practical exam sessions in the reporting period:

- Victoria or Metchosin (19)
- North Vancouver (12)
- Cranbrook (2)
- Vernon (10)
- Fort St. John (3)
- Terrace (2)

The branch also conducted 23 special exam sessions at the request of the British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) and fire departments in the following locations:

- 100 Mile House
- Fort Nelson
- Haida Gwaii
- the Lower Mainland
- Nanaimo
- Oliver
- Port McNeill
- Prince Rupert
- Victoria
- Williams Lake
- Gabriola Island
- Saturna Island

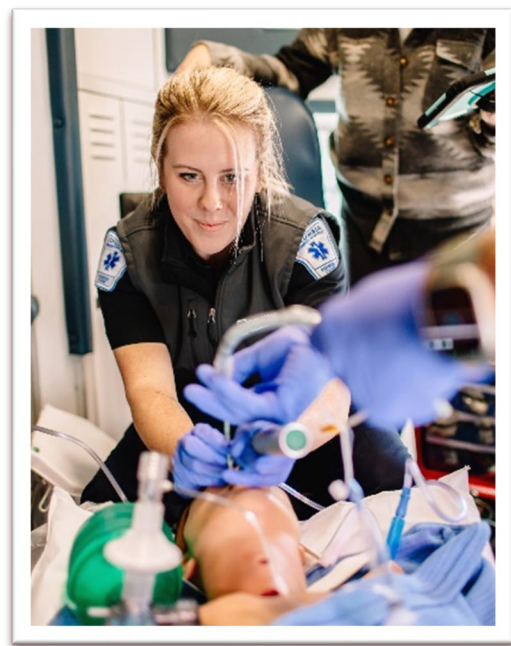


Photo Credit: Columbia Paramedic Academy  
Fall 2021 ACP Student, Sara

During the 48 regular and 23 special exam sessions this year, the EMA Licensing Branch administered 2,762 practical exams, a 40 percent increase over the previous year.

The Branch has 11 special sessions scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2023-2024.

**NOTE:** The variance in practical and written exam volumes from one year to the next is the result of varying rates of failure/retake and/or candidates taking examinations in two different reporting years.



## JURISPRUDENCE EXAMS

The jurisprudence exam addresses legislation, regulation, and policies and is administered to ensure EMAs are familiar with their legal obligations and the governance of their practice. The Branch administered 3,731 jurisprudence exams this year. Most jurisprudence exam candidates (54 percent) were applying for an initial licence, while 25 percent were EMA FRs renewing their licenses. The number of EMA FRs completing the jurisprudence exam is expected to decline as First Responders are no longer required to complete the exam to renew their licence if they renew before their licence expires. Of the remainder, 278 were candidates gaining BC licensure through the Canada Free Trade Agreement; 24 were transferring internationally; 503 were licence reinstatements and the remaining 5 were requirements of Board hearings.



## COPR EXAMS

The Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators' (COPR) Entry to Practice Examination was developed through a rigorous process and is periodically evaluated. COPR has offered national examinations for PCPs and ACPs since 2012. The COPR written examination is “blueprinted” using the National Occupational Competency Profile (NOCP) for paramedics.

The EMA Licensing Board has used the COPR Entry to Practice Examination for PCP and ACP licence categories in BC since November 2015. During 2022-2023, 287 COPR exams were attempted by BC

candidates; 276 in the PCP and 11 in the ACP licence categories. BC PCP candidates had a 91 percent success rate, as compared to the national rate of 73 percent. BC ACP candidates had a 100 percent success rates, as compared to the national rate of 84 percent. BC expects a larger cohort of ACP candidates in future years as there is an additional training institution providing an ACP training program.



Photo Credit: Jessie Broeders  
Jessie “on location” in Hope, BC at the end of a night shift  
COPR 2023 Photo Contest Runner Up

# CONTINUING COMPETENCE

The continuing competence requirements for EMAs at the Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) level and higher are outlined in [Part 4](#) of the EMA Regulation. In each reporting period, EMAs are required to submit 20 patient contacts and 20 continuing education credits to maintain their licence. These requirements are in place to ensure EMAs maintain a high level of competent practice and consistent patient care.

EMAs submit and view their continuing competence online using the Emergency Medical Assistants Continuing Competence System (EMACCS). EMACCS allows EMAs to manage their continuing education and patient contact totals throughout the year to ensure they meet their annual requirements. Licensees receive an automated notification once they have met their annual requirements, and if the requirements are not met, the branch contacts licensees via email reminding them of their regulatory obligation.

Met Requirements by deadline	5,567	78%
Referred to Hearing	735	10%
Relinquished Licence	557	8%
Licence Expired	199	3%
Successfully Adjudicated	52	1%
Failed to Respond	13	< 1%
Met Requirements through exams	4	< 1%
Unsuccessfully Adjudicated	3	< 1%
Licence was revoked by the Board	2	< 1%
Total	7,132	

In the 2021-2022 reporting period 7,132 EMAs were required to submit continuing competence. The outcome of those submissions, which occurred during 2022-2023, are as identified in the table above.



# COMPLAINTS

The EMA Licensing Board, in support of its mandate to protect the public, is empowered under the *Emergency Health Services Act* to investigate complaints regarding patient care, breaches of the EMA Code of Ethics (Schedule 3 of the EMA Regulation), breaches of the terms and conditions of an EMA licence, and when necessary, conduct hearings. Complaints originate from the public and from healthcare professionals, including EMAs, who have a duty to report suspected incompetent practice, impairment, and breaches of the Code of Ethics.

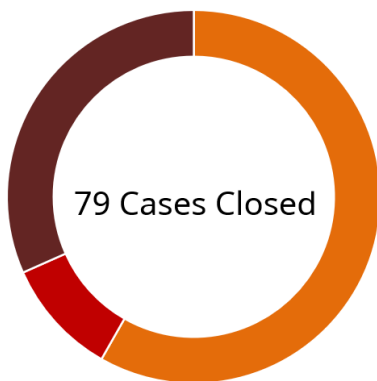
Section 7 of *the Act* provides that the Board may make determinations that an EMA incompetently carried out the duties of an EMA, breached a term and condition of their licence, or suffers from a physical ailment, emotional disturbance, or an addiction to alcohol or drugs that materially impairs their ability to act as an EMA.

The Board can proceed to discipline or consider resolution via alternative dispute resolution. The Board is committed to less punitive and more collaborative and educational outcomes and may therefore have a registrant complete research papers, courses, clinical consultations, and other remedial activity, depending on the circumstances of the complaint and the findings of the investigation and/or hearing. In some cases, the Board may also determine if time-limited terms, conditions, or suspensions should be imposed on a registrant's licence.

From April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, the Board opened 92 complaint files, up 24 percent over 2021-22. The Board closed 79 complaint investigations as compared to 52 from the previous year. The marked increase in closed cases over the previous year was due to the onboarding of an additional Board Officer and the securing of a secondary investigation service. These two initiatives increased capacity contributing to the timeliness in addressing complaints.

Of the 79 closed cases, 46 related to breaches of the EMA Code of Ethics (term and condition of licence), 8 involved incompetence in carrying out the duties of an EMA, and 25 related to both. The details of the cases that resulted in disciplinary action are published on the Board's website as they arise.

**Cases Opened**  
**2021/22**    **2022/23**  
**74**            **92**



**Code of Ethics**            **46**  
**Duties of an EMA**        **8**  
**Both**                            **25**