

Colorado's Professional Review Law: *50 Years of Safety, Quality and Accountability*

BACKGROUND

For nearly 50 years, Colorado has maintained a strong legal and regulatory framework designed to promote patient safety, support continuous improvement and uphold high standards for professional accountability across our health care system. As a result:

- Colorado consistently ranks among the **top states for health care quality** outcomes.
- Patients have **fair recourse** when adverse outcomes occur.
- Doctors, nurses and physician assistants trust the system, contributing to their satisfaction with practicing medicine in Colorado and helping to **ensure access to care** in the state.

CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At the core of this system is the **Colorado Professional Review Act** (CPRA) commonly referred to as Professional Review.

- Authorizes Professional Review Committees to evaluate the competence, conduct and quality of care provided by physicians, physician assistants and advanced practice nurses.
 - Materials related to professional review, such as evaluation reports, are confidential, privileged, not subject to subpoena, and inadmissible in court.
 - Certain adverse actions **must be reported** to the relevant state licensing board for accountability.
 - Participants and institutions are granted legal immunity if certain standards are met.
- Enacted in 1976, the CPRA has been reauthorized by Colorado's General Assembly multiple times, most recently in 2019 via [SB19-234](#), which passed with strong bi-partisan support in both the House (Vote: 62 Aye – 1 No – 2 Other) and Senate (Vote: 35 Aye – 0 No) and the support of dozens of health care stakeholders.
- More than 200 professional review boards currently operate in Colorado.
- Professional review is a national standard—all states except Florida have a similar structure with confidentiality protections.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Professional review committees, operating in hospitals and other health care settings, provide a safe, confidential space for providers to evaluate care and improve practices. These reviews happen not only after errors, but also when providers observe “near misses” or see opportunities for improvement.

Confidentiality protections are essential to:

- Encourage open, honest discussions
- Foster innovation and continuous improvement
- Maintain a constructive, team-based environment

Importantly, accountability is built in: adverse or disciplinary actions must be reported to licensing boards.

Nurses, doctors and everyday Coloradans are counting on you to protect health care quality and patient safety by preserving Colorado's balanced medical confidentiality framework.

WHY PROTECT PROFESSIONAL REVIEW & MEDICAL CONFIDENTIALITY:

PROMOTE PATIENT SAFETY & HEALTH CARE QUALITY

Colorado's medical professional review process gives doctors, nurses and physicians assistants the opportunity to learn from each other and improve their skills and abilities, ensuring patients receive safer, higher-quality care. This practice ultimately reduces the number and frequency of medical mistakes and unexpected adverse outcomes, benefitting everyone in Colorado's health care system.

ENSURE APPROPRIATE PRIVACY

These confidential meetings create a safe space for medical professionals to talk openly and honestly about patient care, while upholding patient privacy and HIPAA compliance. There is no involvement from external organizations—insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies or lawyers—as part of this trusted process.

PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY

Colorado's professional review system holds medical professionals accountable. While internal review discussions stay private, any disciplinary or adverse actions must be reported to licensing boards—and committees do not prevent legal action.

PRESERVE WHAT'S WORKING

For nearly 50 years, Colorado's medical peer review process has been part of a larger accountability and improvement system – one that similarly exists in 49 states – contributing to professional education for doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. It reflects a long-standing consensus and strikes the right balance between improving patient care while also holding medical professionals accountable.

PROTECT ACCESS TO CARE

Colorado's confidential professional review process helps keep health care liability costs stable, making the state an appealing place for nurses and doctors to work and run their practices. If these legal protections are weakened or removed, it could drive medical professionals away—especially in rural areas or specialized medical fields—reducing access to care for everyone.

Coloradans Protecting Patient Access (CPPA) is a broad coalition of Colorado-based organizations that advocate for a stable and predictable medical liability environment by monitoring the courts, advocating at the General Assembly and engaging on relevant ballot measures.

CPPA COLORADANS PROTECTING
PATIENT ACCESS

Learn more at: protectpatientaccessco.org

CONTACTS: Patrick Boyle 303-882-2189 / Kayla Tibbals 303-648-1165 / Meghan MacKillop 720-308-0672