



CHILD AND YOUTH CARE CERTIFICATION

**CHILD AND YOUTH CARE ASSOCIATION OF
MANITOBA**

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

OCTOBER 26, 2001

INTRODUCTION

Certification of Child and Youth Care practitioners is viewed by leaders in the profession as a means toward realizing credibility through the agreement on a set of standards for practice and ensuring that practicing professionals meet those requirements. Ultimately, the goal is the realization of a new level of authority for the profession, driven by the profession. In turn, this could lead to the recognition of the profession's right to monitor, set and influence legislation regarding its practice.

Currently, child and youth care certification in Canada is formally instituted only in Ontario and Alberta as defined by their respective child and youth care associations. The Alberta model is perhaps best known as it involves a training manual, course of study and written, oral, and on-the-job examinations. Needless to say, this caused a stir when the program was first instituted in the province in the mid-80s. The Alberta Certification Program functions as an arm's length entity separate from the association; with close to five hundred child and youth care professionals being certified to date.

In Ontario, a Child Care Worker/Child Youth Worker diploma and formal acceptance of the Code of Ethics was initially all that was required to be certified. Now, the profession requires annual professional development. Members who qualify may add CYC (Cert.) to their names if they so chose and many do so. Dennis McDermott, Executive Director of the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Counselors was reflecting upon the contrast between the two systems and remarked " ...it makes sense that the OACYC would consider adherence to a code of ethics and ongoing professional development to be of greater importance in certification, since both address the maintaining of standards." (2001).

The association in British Columbia has also drafted a certification program, which has never been instituted. In Quebec, "...the state has instituted the basic requirements (certification) to work in the field." (Goodwin, 1998). Three years college education or university education in a related discipline is necessary to practice. There is no formal certification structure as such. Other provinces have expressed interest in the certification process because of the emphasis it places upon standards and accountability but have yet to formally undertake the process.

In Manitoba, the Child and Youth Care Workers Association (CYCWAM) has long looked at certification as a goal. Initially, in the early 1980s, CYCWAM

presented the Alberta model to its members. Then in 1989, CYCWAM prepared a draft Certification Program. (Archives, CYCWAM).

In the United States, a number of state child and youth care associations presently oversee a certification process. Ohio, Texas, Wyoming, Maine, and a few others all have initiatives underway. In 1997, the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, (ACYCP) formerly the National Organization of Child Care Workers Associations, joined with the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA) and the International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care to initiate the North American Child and Youth Care Certification Project or NACP. The Project is ongoing and currently it has a list of competencies and an outline for administration. The intent would be to create an entry level, professional level, and master level for certification. The project is ambitious as such noting:

Credentialing is the primary objective of the NACP. This credential will certify skills and knowledge that generally would require a practitioner to master the skills and knowledge equivalent to a four-year education in the field of child and youth care. At present, no provincial, state or local child and youth care association is concentrating on credentialing practitioners at this level and a consensus has developed that this is the level that the NACP would provide leadership in developing. (NACP, 2000).

Dr. Carol Stuart, Ryerson University, represents the CCCYCA to the NACP, which will meet in October 2001 to review the progress of the project. The current intent remains for a transportable certification respectful of, and administered by, the local associations throughout North America.

The Manitoba scene

Currently, Competency-Based Training provides in-service training for Child and Youth Care Practitioners already working in the province. Participants in these inservices training receive a record of attendance however; there is no formal evaluation to test what skills were acquired. In 1997, the Red River College full-time, two-year Child and Youth Care Diploma program was established. The stated purpose of this program is to educate child and youth care professionals to help children, youth and their families develop their strengths and skills in order to identify and resolve concerns that occur in their lives. Additionally, a certificate in Child and Youth Care continues to be offered through Continuing Education at Red River College. Thus, in the 1990s Manitoba went from having no formal training in child and youth care to

there being a Competency Based In-Service Training System and formal educational opportunities.

Regardless, there remains no formal certification process for practitioners in this province. As noted by the Academy of Child and Youth Care Professionals “a viable system of certification and licensing of child and youth workers needs to be established.” (2000). CYCWAM has adopted the responsibility of addressing this need by developing a Certification Program. Certification will allow the association to monitor and self-regulate those who practice child and youth care in this province. CYCWAM believes that professional Child and Youth Care practitioners deserve this recognition. They have earned it through education, practice, and the ongoing application of personal development through study and workshops. Further, CYCWAM believes that Certification will provide practitioners an avenue to step forward as representatives of the best the profession has to offer.

THE INTENT OF CERTIFICATION

This section outlines the merits of certification. The ideas have been taken largely from Leanne Rose’s thesis. Her thesis, Professionalization of Child and Youth Care in British Columbia provides an excellent overview on the topics of certification, professionalism and the Child and Youth Care practitioner.

Child and Youth Care as a field of practice has become more firmly established in North America. This is true at a national level in Canada and, definitely in the province of Manitoba over the past ten years. Many in the field have remarked that the practice is seen to be moving steadily towards becoming a recognized profession, both within the field itself, and increasingly, in the sectors in which the work is performed. As a field of work, child and youth care encompasses those practitioners who are primarily involved in providing developmental and therapeutic care giving for children and youth in their day-to-day environment or life space. Practitioners who emerge from this work into positions of support (supervisor, trainer, educator, policy advisor, researcher, or administrator) are also considered part of the profession. (Rose, 1990, p.2)

Leanne Rose argues that the continued development of the child and youth care profession will require the design and implementation of a means to identify and assess both the competencies and the formal acquisition of knowledge and skills. She sees this as necessary for various levels of practice of child and youth care work. “It is believed that this will ensure at

least an appropriate minimum level of qualifications of workers and will contribute to a full recognition for its professional status” (Rose, 1990, p.2). The field of child and youth care “to be truly professional, needs to be perceived as professional not only in the eyes of allied fields and the public in general, but more significantly, by its members themselves” (Rose, 1990, p.31).

Dr. Carol Stuart suggests that the central value that should be driving all efforts of professionalization, certification, educational programming, and service delivery for child and youth care is present in the name: Child and Youth CARE. The word care reflects the central value of child and youth care practice. The quality care for children and youth; the quality of life for children and youth; and the rights of children, youth, and their families to healthy environments in which they can grow and develop to their full potential is what child and youth care is all about (<http://www.cyc-net.org/stuart.html>).

It is important to note that the structure of child and youth care practice has evolved significantly over the past twenty-five years (Rose, 1990, p.108). A shift in the movement from a singularly residential care focus to a community based and family focus for child and youth care practitioners can be identified. Practitioners are working in a considerably wider variety of diverse work environments than they had been in the past, including family homes and school settings, child life programs, correctional and justice settings, and child and adolescent mental health programs. “Child and youth care practitioners are now widely visible at the broader community level” (Rose, 1990, p.108). Rose further points out that the movement of child and youth care practitioners into the community and public eye has placed a number of additional demands upon the profession in general. First, proficiency in working effectively with government and allied professions has become a necessity. Contact with a variety of allied professionals requires that child and youth care practitioners present with credible and reliable skills and knowledge. They must be able to advocate client needs effectively to, (and along side) other professionals. Secondly, there is the heightened need for child and youth care practitioners to be increasingly accountable to the public through professional association and client-practitioner relationships. Finally, with the expansion of the settings in which child and youth care practitioners work has come the need for a more “collaborative perspective and a more eclectic understanding of the community as a whole...As such, child and youth care workers can no longer limit their skills and knowledge to residential care, but must now expand that base to include the elements of these various settings”, (Rose, 1990, p109 -110).

The literature on professionalization indicates that there are a number of criteria by which we traditionally assess whether or not occupations have

reached the level of a “profession”. These criteria include the following points; a) provision of an essential service to people, b) established educational standards for membership in the profession, and c) a body of knowledge that is unique to the field. Other points that define a profession include the recognized authority from both clientele and colleagues and there must be a body or association that lobbies for the profession. This association must have the ability to influence regulations or legislation that enhances the objectives, autonomy, and self-regulation of the profession. In other words, the professionals themselves monitor practice.

Rose points out that a number of steps toward professional status for child and youth care have been taking place throughout North America. The establishment of formal education and training programs at the post secondary level, which embodies specific Child and Youth Care knowledge in almost every jurisdiction in the United States and Canada, is one step. There has been the development of professional journals, texts and other publications along with the establishment of national and provincial child and youth care associations. A recognized Code of Ethics, provincial, nationally and within North America has been established. The development of regional, national, and international conferences for professional child and youth care practitioners are also in place.

Rose also indicates that, despite the continued development and availability of education and training opportunities, the field of child and youth care as a profession has yet to establish minimum qualifications for its workers in most jurisdictions. The need to implement a regulatory process is supported not only by the literature on professionalization, but also “by the very nature of the critical role that child and youth care workers perform” (Rose, 1990, p.3). The various tasks that child and youth care practitioners carry out is significant because of the complex nature of the tasks. Couple this with the vulnerability of the clientele indicates that not only are the education and training of child and youth care practitioners of utmost importance, it is critical that the qualifications of these personnel be monitored by a regulatory process. This regulatory process must be designed to ensure the competence of individual practitioners. This, thereby, will ensure a high quality of service and accountability (Rose, 1990, p.5).

There is a distinction between the terms *professionalism* and *professionalization* that is worth making (Rose, 1990, p.90). Professionalism refers to those attitudes and behaviours which individuals demonstrate in their work. In other words, they are the characteristics of the individual. Thus, all workers can demonstrate professionalism in their work, regardless of their occupation. Many child and youth care practitioners legitimately pride themselves on their level of professionalism. Professionalization on the other

hand, refers to the overall development of occupations or professions as a whole. It is their development in terms of the recognized defining criteria of profession (Rose, 1990, p.9). Self-regulation, by way of certification, is the remaining step in the professionalization of child and youth care.

Professional Regulation:

Given the previous discussion it is now pertinent to review what is entailed in the development of professional self-regulation. According to Leanne Rose professional regulation of some form is seen to be necessary in order for an occupation to control the market and to move closer to becoming a "bona fide" profession. "This process is most often initiated by the professional association and maintains as its primary purpose the intent to ensure that some level of competency is possessed by those in the field" (1990, p.21). Rose points out that there are three basic types of formal self-regulation found in the subject literature (1990, p.22). The three types are registration, certification, and licensure. The following paragraphs defines each type,

Registration.

Registration is a form of control. The professional association sets academic standards that are required in order for the practitioner to be placed upon a list as active. Applicants are required to provide proof of their qualifications. Registration is voluntary and does not provide the applicant with exclusivity of title or practice (Rose, 1990, p.22).

Certification.

Certification establishes minimum standards for entry into any given profession. The process of becoming certified involves requirements pertaining to education, training, professional experience, and completion of an examination. Under certification, individual practitioners within the profession are certified through some form of an examination to determine that the required education, training, and knowledge criteria are met.

This form of credentialing requires the certifying body to make an assessment to the competence and skill level of the applicant. Certification is also a voluntary form of self regulation, and, therefore, does not place restrictions on who may practice
(Rose, 1990, p.23).

Licensure.

Licensure provides the individuals with the exclusive right to practice in their fields. "It allows for the monopolization of both title and practice through a legislative process, and therefore restricts who can and cannot provide those services" (Rose, 1990, p.23). Through licensure, the profession is sanctioned, defined by law, and regulated by government.

There are certain principles in the literature that pertains to the regulatory process for professions. Leanne Rose cites the work of Trebilock, Tuohy & Wolfson, as being most pertinent. These authors studied four professions: architecture, law, engineering, and accounting in Ontario. "They established a framework by which to view professional regulation and looked at whether regulatory regulation in a particular professional market was justified" (Rose, 1990, p.23). Further, Rose suggests that any profession seeking to enter into self-regulation can utilize the framework.

Trebilock et. al. identifies three groups or party categories of interest involved in the practice of any profession. The first group reflects the interests of the profession itself. "These interests extend from individual practitioners...to the allied professionals who need to protect their territory from being encroached upon" (Rose, 1990, p.23). The recipients of the designated services, the client(s), are designated the second party. Here is where we see a discussion of both quality and quantity of the service provided. The third party interests are those interests that are directly affected by interactions or decisions that are made between the client and the service provider without necessarily involving the third party.

Rose indicates that Trebilock et al identify four principles that should guide the development of self-regulatory policies for professionals. These principles are: a) protection of vulnerable parties, b) fairness of regulation, c) feasibility of regulation, and d) public accountability of the regulatory body (1990, p25-28). CYCWAM has carefully considered these four principles in the development of their certification program.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

CYCWAM followed the steps of the certification process outlined by Galbraith and Gilley (1986; Rose 1990, p105). These steps are presented below in point form.

- Identification of the purpose or motive;
- Identification and development of competencies;
- Procedures involved in developing a program;
- Determination of the market (i.e. who will the program be offered to?);
- Structural issues to be identified and debated;
- Qualification criteria;
- Marketing the certification program;
- Re-evaluation of the certification process;
- Re-marketing

These points are actually stages in the steps toward professional certification. The reader of this document should be able to readily identify these developments that CYCWAM went through and will go through in developing its certification program.

COMPETENCIES

The following competencies were developed after a thorough review of listed documents: Academy of Child and Youth Care Professionals (ACYCP) Certification Competencies; the Manitoba Competency Based Training Initiative: Core Competencies; the Manitoba Competency Based Training Initiative Individual Training Needs Assessment; and the Red River College Diploma Program Curriculum.

I. Professionalism

This competency addresses the practitioner's awareness of the profession. Awareness includes knowledge on how to access professional literature and information about local and national professional activities (e.g. Organizations, conferences, and certification) and professional issues and future trends and challenges in one's area of special interest. Contribution to

the ongoing development of the field, awareness of personal and professional values and their implications for practice is also a part of this competency. A professional practitioner demonstrates the ability to reflect and evaluate one's performance. This includes needs identification for professional growth. Self-awareness through recognition of personal strengths and limitations, feelings and needs, is also a part of professionalism. A point worthy of emphasize is the ability to ensure that children, youth, and family views are heard and considered during the decision-making processes, which will directly affect them.

II. Applied Human Development

This competency is the thorough knowledge of the stages, processes and milestones of normal physical, cognitive, social, sexual, and emotional development of children from birth through adolescence. The professional understands the potential negative effects of abuse and neglect on a child's development and can identify indicators of developmental delay or problems in abused and or neglected children.

The competent practitioner is able to integrate developmental services for children and make appropriate recommendations and referrals for developmental assessment and services. The practitioner adjusts for the effects of age, culture, background, experience, and developmental status on verbal and nonverbal communication. There is a demonstrated ability to foster affection and physical contact that reflects sensitivity for the clients' individuality, age, development, and culture. A demonstrated ability to design and implement programs and planned environments that integrate developmental, preventive, and therapeutic objects into the life space using developmentally sensitive methodologies and techniques.

III. Cultural and human diversity

This competency refers to the practitioner's ability to describe personal biases and stereotypes about others based on age, class, race, ethnicity, ability, language, spiritual beliefs, education, and gender. The practitioner must be able to differentiate between own cultural values and the cultural values of others, avoid stereotyping, and be able to seek assistance when own limitations may affect understanding and responding to cultural and human differences. They need to know how to access and evaluate resources that advance cultural understandings and appreciation of human diversity, and support children, youth, and families in accessing them. The practitioner needs to understand how family of origin impacts the way children may interact with others and support children, youth, families, and programs in

overcoming barriers to services that are created as a result of cultural and human diversity.

Further evidence of competency is the ability to adjust verbal and non-verbal communication for the effects of age, cultural and human diversity, background, experience, and development. Information is given in a manner sensitive to cultural and human diversity and contributes to the maintenance of a professional environment.

Also, the competent practitioner will use the understanding of cultural differences to establish positive working relationships with youth and families from different cultural backgrounds. The practitioner will develop culturally appropriate service plans and design and implement programs that integrate developmental, preventative, and therapeutic objects into the life space.

IV. Relationship and Communication Competencies

This competency refers to the practitioner's abilities to demonstrate a variety of communication skills including: paraphrasing, reflection of feelings, empathy, open and closed questioning, challenging behavior, self-disclosure, describing behaviors, summarizing, problem solving, alternatives to conflict, assertiveness skills, awareness of communication roadblocks, "I" messages. The competent practitioner is able to set appropriate boundaries and limits on the behavior using clear and respectful communication. The practitioner is able to verbally and nonverbally de-escalate crisis situations in a manner that protects dignity and integrity. The practitioner identifies and demonstrates the personal characteristics that foster and support relationship development such as respect, honesty, predictability, contact, attentiveness, dependability, communication, appreciation, shared interests, commitment, tolerance and flexibility, mutual respect, and compassion. There is demonstrated use of structure, routines, and activities to promote effective relationships.

Competency refers to the ability to recognize the influence of relationship history and to be able to help the child develop productive ways of relating to family and peers. The practitioner will employ strategies to connect children to their life history and relationships and will teach parents skills and attitudes that foster positive and healthy relationships.

Teamwork and professional communication skills that establish and maintain effective relationships within a team by promoting and maintaining professional conduct are also reflective of a professional practitioner.

V. Developmental Practice Methods

This competency refers to the practitioner's ability to use intervention planning that encourages client participation in assessment and goal setting. The development of individual educational and developmental treatment plans that integrates client empowerment and supportive of strengths are signs of the initiatives of professional practitioners.

Program planning and activity programming that teach skills in several domains are another mark of a competent practitioner. The practitioner must be able to design and implement programs and activities which integrate age, developmental, cultural, preventative, and treatment requirements into the life space that nurtures the strengths of the client.

They must also design and implement activities of daily living that support children and youth in their life space. The practitioner needs to have knowledge of basic counselling skills and techniques, with an understanding of the importance of using them. The practitioner encourages insight and problem solving. The practitioner must be able to understand the value of family focused practice that empowers family by understanding the importance of involving them in all aspects of planning and decision making.

The practitioner must be able to employ developmental practice methods in a group context and know stages of group development.

Ability to manage behaviors based on an assessment of the strengths and limitations of specific behavioural management methods and the client's level of understanding and needs is another necessary skill. Practitioners must know how to evaluate and disengage from power struggles and assess a young person's problematic behaviours, and determine which of these behaviours should be addressed immediately, which should wait, and which should not be addressed at all.

A competent practitioner must be able to engage the community in responding to the needs of children, youth and families.

Criteria for Certification

CYCWAM has considered the work of other associations, and in particular, the criteria that other associations have used for certification of members. TO BE DISCUSSED FOR REVISION:

Criteria:

1. First, they must be members of CYCWAM and have signed the Child and Youth Care Association of Manitoba Code of Ethics. Membership is a public commitment to the profession. The Association is the certifying body and it is the major formal voice representing the collective interests of its members. This lends itself to also being the political voice for child and youth care practitioners and their vulnerable clients.
2. Secondly, to be eligible for certification, the practitioner must have worked a minimum of 2080 hours in the field, (MORE?) be currently employed and not on probation, and can provide two letters of reference. One of the referees must be a current supervisor who has supervised the applicant longer than six months.
3. The third step is an oral examination (WRITTEN?) conducted by two CYCWAM designated examiners. Once certified the practitioner must complete forty hours of professional development annually to maintain certification.

Consideration has also been given to formal education and experiences when reviewing applications for certification. A diploma or degree in Child and Youth Care is the preferred formal education. Applicants possessing this education may formally request to waive the oral examination requirement upon receipt of evidence i.e., transcript and a letter of reference from their college or university advisor. The length of time worked will be reduced to 1040 hours for graduates with a Diploma or Degree in Child and Youth Care. Applicants with other university degrees will still need to take the oral examination but can apply to have the number of hours worked reduced to 1040 hours. The exception would be those applicants that possess a university degree and a Certificate in Child and Youth Care. These applicants would be viewed as the same as an applicant possessing a diploma or degree in Child and Youth Care.

The intent of the oral examination is to measure the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the child and youth care competencies as outlined in this document.

In addition, to be discussed:

Level One: Diploma in Child and Youth Care OR Bachelor Degree and Certificate in Child and Youth Care

Level Two: 2 years experience, relevant education and Completion of Competency Based Training

Level Three: Combination of experience and education.

As per the child care licensing model, it is proposed for managed care programs that licensing would require at minimum one Level One or Level Two certified staff to be on duty during evening shift time to provide adequate supervision.

There could be a grandfathering period of five years (2006 – 2011). One principle of the certification program is that it be as inclusive as possible without compromising accountability and standards of service. Certification requirements for grandfathering are minimum five years experience in child and youth care practice. The applicant will undergo the oral (or written) examination and will provide two letters of reference from (certified) supervisors in the field.

SUMMARY

In closing, CYCWAM continues to evaluate the application process and the eligibility requirements. The intent of the evaluation is to ensure that the certification program meets the needs of the profession for self-regulation and accountability. Feedback from the employers and supporters of the child and youth care community is presently being solicited. The board of CYCWAM has prioritized certification in its strategic mission for the years 2006-2007. It is intended that the marketing and implementation of membership and the certification program will be the major thrust of the board's work during this time frame.