

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

Report on the Consideration of Accreditation for Child and Youth Care Education Programs

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Child and Youth Care practitioners hold key positions with allied health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and nurses) in planning and delivering services to children, youth and families. As the field of Child and Youth Care has evolved, so has the need for child and youth care workers to establish their credibility and status as other professional groups before them. Certainly professional associations play a key role in professional credibility. Additionally, a major step towards professional credibility and status is the accreditation of educational and training programs.

The advent of the National Association of Child Care Workers Associations, Child Welfare Leagues of America and Canada, and the proliferation of educational and training institutions in child and youth care both nationally and internationally, accentuate the readiness for some form of accreditation in child and youth care. To this end, selected educators in child and youth care (please see listing later in this document) were invited to the University of Victoria in March, 1990 to consider:

- whether accreditation in child and youth care is needed and wanted in North America;
- whether the profession is ready for accreditation;
- what form of accreditation would best suit child and youth care;
- how to proceed, if at all.

This report presents the considerations and decisions of a newly formed group which named itself the **Child and Youth Care Educational Consortium (CYCEC)**. CYCEC builds on some of the ideas generated

at the Pittsburgh Conference in 1981/82 to extend the quality of education in Child and Youth Care. It is the intention of CYCEC to discuss the Victoria meeting with others in child and youth care, in order to unite educators in addressing the objectives and goals agreed to at the meeting. It is anticipated that the overall effect would be the creation of an educational network which enhances child and youth care practices in North America. However, consideration of accreditation is still in an early developmental stage and not a formulated project cast in stone!

Is Accreditation Wanted and Needed?

In its deliberations about accreditation for child and youth care, CYCEC considered traditional accreditation models such as:

Accreditation is, essentially, the approval of a school by an established and highly reputable educational accrediting organization and the consequent membership of the school in the approving organization.

Accreditation is a process of recognizing those educational institutions whose performance and integrity entitle them to the confidence of the educational community and the public.

External validation of quality by appropriate professional groups to foster continued excellence, assures the public of program quality, provides programs with intra-institutional negotiation leverage, promotes interinstitutional communication, and enhances the prestige and credibility of the professional program.

Accreditation is the status granted to an educational institution or program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality.

The basic principles, values and issues facing accreditation in the future as posed by Kenneth Young (1982) were also discussed. Basically, the principles included the following:

Accreditation is self-regulatory with self being the institution of postsecondary education. It is nongovernmental, therefore apolitical. Accreditation serves the public ends: to the student it provides assurance about program quality, assistance in credit transfer, definition for entering a profession; to the institution being accredited it provides self-evaluation and self-direction,

guards against external encroachment, enhancement of reputation and possible eligibility for additional funding; to the profession it provides a means for practitioners to set requirements for preparation to enter the profession and contributes to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparations and practice.

While accreditation is traditionally an evaluative process which has moved from being external review focused, to being more dependent on self-evaluation, there are crucial issues about accreditation which raised the following doubts:

- Can accreditation criteria be developed that emphasize institution reevaluation and improvement, rather than minimal standards?
- Can accreditation be more exciting and stimulating and not just a “jump the hoop” process?
- Can accreditation be simplified and still be effective?
- Can accreditation establish a procedure that can maintain flexibility to ensure quality, when the objectives and definitions of quality in child and youth care are changing?

In spite of these pressing questions, CYCEC concluded that some form of accreditation is needed. However, clarification of the need for accreditation, what to accredit and of the accreditation process itself, must be achieved before educators and field practitioners can determine whether they want it.

Is the Profession Ready?

To determine the readiness of the profession for accreditation, CYCEC considered both the maturity of the field and the availability of child and youth care education programs. Doubts raised in consideration of traditional accreditation led to thoughtful discussion of what exactly would be accredited? CYCEC determined that the purpose of accreditation in child and youth care would be an examination of:

*Education for **caregiving** for children, youth and their families, ensuring that education of caregiving focuses on both the developmental need and therapeutic needs for children, youth and their families.*

Caring was defined as an attitude which demonstrated a feeling of compassion, concern and empathy for others. It was viewed as nurturance being directed toward early child, youth and family life space through three levels of intervention: prevention, early intervention and treatment.

More reflections on this aspect of accreditation seemed warranted and as a result, a special group has taken on the task of further defining who we are, what we do, and our professional objectives or purpose of child and youth care practice.

What Type of Accreditation?

To achieve accreditation of education for caregiving, CYCEC proposes that, rather than have a traditional accreditation approach, educators in child and youth care should embrace a methodology for self-study and peer review which is more creative in nature, and should be referred to as a formative accreditation process. Such a process would have to include the following qualities and principles:

1. Design and maintain a decentralized association, not larger than the programs being reviewed.
2. That the association be a collective endeavor of educational institutions, professional associations and consumers.
3. That accreditation meet the needs of the field **and** of the program being reviewed.
4. That membership be inclusive rather than exclusive (community college and university programs).
5. That the accreditation association provide leadership and support.
6. That the accreditation association promote the development and enhancement of child and youth care education and training programs.
7. That the accreditation association provide acknowledgement of programs which promotes credibility of programs.
8. That the accreditation association offer technical support.

9. That the accreditation process be a self-review process.
10. That accreditation make a distinction between education and training: the distinction being, that education prepares for long term, has theoretical frameworks, is knowledge based and is less focused on immediate need; whereas, training is preparing for the shorter term, immediate application, not necessarily transferable from one setting to another and may be less theoretically based.

Thoughtful and reflective discussion urged CYCEC to establish an association and accreditation process that would maintain all of the advantages and attempt to avoid many of the pitfalls of traditional accreditation process.

Professional Identity

In order to be ready for accreditation, CYCEC members felt that it was imperative that child and youth care educators be clear about the field's professional identity. There was considerable discussion on the need to articulate a child and youth care criteria of professionalism. It was specifically noted that professional identity in child and youth care was not to be bound by established forms of education or credentials. Rather, it was purported that child and youth care professional identity, evidenced by a frame of mind "to entertain the whole child, not be confined to certain functions or activities with children and youth, nor be confined to particular settings. The content and responsibilities of child and youth care worker's jobs requires clarification and the knowledge base required to do the job needs to be identified before accreditation can proceed.

How to Proceed

At the conclusion of this three-day meeting, the following objective was determined:

To develop a decentralized organization to be known as the Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, designed to develop and enhance child and youth care education programs in North America, in

order to enhance the quality of care to children, youth and their families. The CYCEC will:

1. Provide leadership and support in the field of child and youth care education.
2. Provide support that enhances the management of education programs within larger institutions.
3. Provide technical support to education programs (e.g., practical teaching, etc.).
4. Provide a program review that endorses child and youth care education programs.

In order to accomplish this objective, a task force was established and the following goals were assigned to participants:

- determine the membership potential (to be inclusive as opposed to exclusive),
- define a knowledge base for the field of child and youth care as it relates to "caregiving,"
- design a structure and attendant functions for CYCEC (an organizational design) e.g., computer user group for effective communication,
- identify the need for and secure finances and resources for 1991/92 operations,
- design and test a program review mechanism (e.g., quality assurance review), and propose models for program endorsement which ensures the quality of child and youth care programs in North America,
- communicate with potential membership and vested interest groups to secure a collective endeavor attitude.

It was agreed that the above goals should be attained by May, 1991 and reported to CYCEC at a meeting to be held at the International Child and Youth Care Conference in Montreal, Quebec. All members present volunteered to participate in one or more work groups and agreed to present an initial report for review by the consortium by September 30, 1990.

**Invited Participants at the Accreditation Meeting
Held March 15 - 17, 1990 at the University of Victoria**

David Burges
Child & Youth Care Worker Program
Douglas College

Dr. Henry W. Maier
Professor Emeritus
School of Social Work
University of Washington

Dr. Mary Lyon, Chair
Child Study Department
Mount St. Vincent University

Dr. Victor Savicki, Director
Clinical Child & Youth
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Western Oregon State College

Dr. Richard Tremblay, Directeur
Ecole de Psycho-education
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Dr. Karen VanderVen
CDICC, School of Social Work
University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Mark Krueger, Director
Child & Youth Care Learning Center
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Dr. Francis Hare, Director
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Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

Dr. Bruce Ryan
Department of Family Studies
University of Guelph

Dr. Richard Goldman, Dean
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Dr. Ken Craig
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JOIN THE CIRCLE OF CARE

NOCCWA

The National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations is dedicated to improve the quality of care for children, youth, and families by promoting the professional development of the child and youth care field.

These are some of the issues NOCCWA supports:

- Professional care for children, youth and families
- Education for child and youth care workers
- Higher standards of practice for child and youth care workers
- Certification

Benefits of Membership:

- Opportunity to become a part of the professional movement
- Subscription to the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*
- Newsletters and information about upcoming international, national, and local conferences, workshops, and professional events

NOCCWA is a nonprofit organization, which consists of State and Professional Associations of child and youth care workers, agencies, and individuals.

For membership information call:

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