CREAM CITY SUMMIT III: REPORT FROM MARCH 2003 MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP COALITION FOR PROFESSIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

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On March 27& 28, 2003, over eighty practitioners, educators, association officers, and administrators from across the U.S. and Canada attended a meeting in Milwaukee of the International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care. The purpose was to discuss and mobilize support for the North American Certification Project's effort to implement national professional certification for child and youth care workers in the United States. The meeting was hosted by the Youth Work Learning Center, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in partnership with the Wisconsin Association of Child and Youth Care Professionals.

BACKGROUND ON ILCPCYC

The ILCPCYC was formed in 1992 by child and youth care educators, administrators, and direct line practitioners who wanted to work together to promote professional development of child and youth care, and later, youth development, in the US and Canada. ILCPCYC (1992) was designed as an inclusive coalition that was open to anyone who wished to join and support the development of the profession. It was a strictly volunteer coalition with no bylaws or elected officials.

The first meeting was held in Milwaukee (the Cream City). Participants developed action plans in research, educational development, marketing and professional certification. During the next five years, several significant steps were taken, including collaborations with the North American Consortium of Child and Youth Care Education Program to conduct educators' days at several major child and youth care conferences, research partnerships, and an effort to compare and contrast state and provincial certification processes.

Project management team meetings were held in Victoria and Milwaukee. In 1997, at a project management meeting in Toronto, certification was identified in partnership with the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) and the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA), as a priority, and together these three groups decided to form the North American Certification Project (NACP) with a five-year goal to implement professional certification.

A second meeting (Cream City Summit II) was held in 1999 in conjunction with members of the growing youth development field to report the progress of NACP. One of the goals for this meeting was to explore similarities in the goals of child and youth care and youth development to develop the profession and certification. Several areas of collaboration related to certification, education, and research were also identified. Members of the school age and youth development movements joined the effort, forming a broader based coalition.

During the next three years, under the leadership of ACYCP, members of NACP worked diligently to develop a comprehensive certification process. Participants in NACP included educators, practitioners, and administrators from a number of associations, universities, colleges, and agencies across North America. In addition to identifying competencies and a structure for certification, they held several discussions among themselves and with others at conferences and on the internet about the pros and cons of certification.

This led to the third meeting of ILCPCYC, which was called specifically to explore how the coalition could further support NACP.

CREAM CITY SUMMIT III

Day One, Afternoon

The meeting was launched on Thursday afternoon with an exciting dance performance by youth from the Milwaukee Public Theatre's, St. Joan Antida Steppers, followed by a panel of youth workers, who spoke about how the NACP competencies were being integrated into education and training components of the Milwaukee Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship program. Then leaders of NACP (David Thomas, President ACYCP, Houston Texas, Martha Mattingly, University of Pittsburgh, & Lew Meckley, Gustavus Adolphus, Jamestown, NY) presented a summary of the work completed to date including competencies; education, experience, and training requirements; and assessment (for a detailed summary see Thomas and Mattingly in the 2002 issue of Child and Youth Care Work).

Some of the participants were just learning about certification while others had been involved from the beginning. Several important questions were raised during and after the presentations. People seemed impressed by the amount of work done by NACP. A mix of skepticism and optimism about the process and products of NACP ran through the discussion. Concern was raised about a number of hurdles and the potential of excluding those who were new or had different viewpoints. At the same time there was excitement about how far the process had come and could go in the next few years.

Day One, Evening

The Wisconsin Association of Child and Youth Care Professionals held an awards celebration and social event in Milwaukee's Riverwest Neighborhood, an area of the city with several youth programs. Highlighted with performance by the Latino Community Center's Superforce Breakdancers, the evening provided opportunities for people from around the country to mingle and celebrate their work. Several youth workers from Wisconsin were recognized with awards for outstanding youth service.

Day Two, Morning

On the second day, participants divided into work groups on certification, education, and research. The purpose for these groups was to develop recommendations for NACP to consider. Martha Mattingly, and Lew Meckley led the certification discussion, Varda Mann Feder, Concordia University, Montreal guided the education discussion, and Doug Magnuson, University of Northern Iowa was in charge of research. As on the previous day, the discussions were lively with expressions of concern and enthusiasm about the future.

Education Recommendation
1. Align training/education programs with the core competencies. (Members of the whole group are committed to examining their own programs in relation to this recommendation).
2. Develop an assessment to include: a generic section for all applicants related to core competencies.
3. Design specific modules (especially in relation to case histories) that are administered to candidates with different subspecialties (early childcare vs. residential youth work etc. etc.). The concern is that educator/ training programs are delivered in specific contexts and that professional level certification should not mean that all workers know all subspecialties.
4. Develop subcommittees to work on action plans in the following areas:
    Funding for education, training, and grantsmanship
    Legislation (licensing, salaries)
    Marketing (increase public awareness, market professionalism to the field)
    Curriculum that relate to access/incentives for education/ training/certification
    (development of parameters, eventual accreditation).
5. Renew the focus of the NACP on inclusion of diverse national organizations and professional caregivers, workers whose perspective may not be reflected thus far. The group emphasized the critical importance of mindfulness and concrete structures to promote inclusivity.

Research and Evaluation Recommendations:
1. Conduct a literature review on the field that identifies the sources of theory and practice that the certification process assumes.
2. Specify a research plan: activities, purposes, tools, and data collection.
3. Plan for validity and reliability of certification: varieties of goals, cultures, occupations, demographics, geographies, and so forth.
4. Make the process public the same way the competency document was made public.

Certification Recommendations:
1. Articulate the levels and current proposed credentials. The next steps in the development of certification are to define the different levels of certification and the credentials required for each level.
2. Make certification accessible and user friendly. Consider the challenges applicants will face, and explore alternatives for making the process available to as many qualified workers as possible.
3. Get the word out.
4. Tie certification in with career "lattices." Look at the interconnections between certification, education, and careers.

Day Two, Afternoon
On Friday afternoon, Frank Eckles from the Certification Institute of Texas led the group in a process of teasing out themes from the three work groups that could serve as action areas for the ILCPCYCW. By the end of the day, a tired and somewhat dwindling group (many people had to return home or to work), but enthusiastic group of about 25 participants identified the following tasks to work on in support of NACP:

Funding:
Acquire funds to support the work of NACP. Michael Foley, The Training Connection, KY, agreed to chair this committee, which will explore options and develop strategic plans.

Marketing:
Market certification. A group including Amy Jackson, City Year, Mattapan, MA., Michael Mitchell, Community Adolescent Programs, Madison, WI., Karen VanderVen, University of Pittsburgh, and Cydney Zollicoffer, Heartlove Place, Milwaukee, will pursue this goal. The group does not yet have a chair, but Amy Jackson agreed to lead e-mail discussions and coordinate list serves discussion for getting the word out.

Legislation/Accreditation:
Introduce legislation that supports certification and interfaces it with agency accreditation. Madeline Rybicki, Holy Family Institute,

Lakewood, Ohio will chair this group. Ellen Gannett, Wellesley College agreed to work with her.

Themes from the Two Days

Members of the Youth Work Learning Center staff, who observed and participated in the process, identified the following themes in the discussions and minutes.

- While there are many unanswered questions about issues such as pay, incentive, etc., it is important to maintain the momentum and move forward. The process is dynamic and evolving. It will improve as we continue to research, discuss, and learn from it as it develops over the next few years.

- We have to get the word out. The sooner we let administrators, practitioners, educators, and policy makers know about certification the better.

- Assessment will be a key component of the process. There are still many questions to be answered about how to implement certification in a fair and effective manner.

- Tension existed between new participants and old. A fine balance has to be achieved between including new participants and giving them a chance to be heard while at the same time avoiding too much repetition that will deter from the essential forward movement of the certification process.

SUMMARY

At the end of the two days, the summit had achieved its major purpose, which was to mobilize more support for certification. Over eighty participants had given their time and resources to work together to take another crucial step in the development of the field as a profession. Certification had been presented, discussed and questioned from several perspectives. Recommendations were made to NACP in the areas of certification, education, and research. Three specific areas-- funding, marketing, and legislation/accreditation—were also identified as the focal points of the ILCPCYC action over the next couple years. A meeting of the work groups was slated for the International Child and Youth Care Conference in Victoria, British Columbia in August 2003. A list serve (cccsummit3@uwm.edu) was also created to coordinate the activities of the work groups. For those who are interested in signing up for the list serve and one of the above activities, e-mail rflowers@uwm.edu and ccsummit3@uwm.edu.

Personal Note by Mark Krueger, Chair, ILCPCYC

This meeting had many new faces with energy for being part of something they could contribute to in significant ways. Their voices will be a key to our future success. I hope many of them will continue to be part of and lead the process forward.