

CERTIFICATION UPDATE: THE NORTH AMERICAN CERTIFICATION PROJECT ANNOUNCES THE PILOT TESTING OF THE FULL PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL

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The North American Certification Project (NACP), sponsored by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP), concluded the initial pilot testing of the full professional certification level in August 2006. This event marks a significant development in the establishment of a nationally recognized credential that spans the entire field of child and youth care.

The pilot testing program is the culmination of work that has been underway over the last 15 years. The work is supported by ACYCP, International Leadership Coalition for Professional CYC Practice (ILC), National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS), CYC Certification Institute, CYC Learning Center of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and many other local, regional and state organizations.

The work has led to the construction of an internationally recognized code of ethics that has been adopted by many state, provincial and national child and youth care professional organizations. In addition, over 150 sets of competencies describing child and youth care practice, drawn from a wide variety of practice settings, have been analyzed and refined by an expert panel. These competencies describe the knowledge and skills expected from a fully competent CYC professional practitioner and provide the foundation for the certification effort. The competencies were categorized into three groups depending on how the competency could best be assessed: whether by examination, supervisor performance assessment or competency-based portfolio.

A major component of the certification process is the development of a reliable and valid situational judgment exam. This exam is based on: the Code of Ethics; Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Workers; the identified competencies, and case studies elicited from the field. Child and youth care expert panel members have been involved in (1) developing the exam, (2) prioritizing competencies (weighting of competency areas to determine the number of test items for each competency), (3) reviewing the items for readability and cultural bias, and (4) determining the most correct answer for each item.

The pilot testing research is being conducted by Dale Curry at Kent State University in collaboration with a North American committee that represents practitioners, educators, and employers. The testing is based on responses collected from 778 practitioners drawn from multiple child and youth care practice settings from across the United States and Canada. The research effort focuses on establishing the reliability and validity of the 100 item scenario-based exam. Information is also being collected on the usability and appropriateness of the application forms, supervisor assessment, reference forms and portfolio.

The preliminary findings of the NACP pilot testing program, the largest research effort of its kind ever undertaken, will be reported at the 8th International CYC Conference in Montreal in October 2006. The entire credentialing effort will be revised based on the results of the research and feedback solicited from participating practitioners. When fully implemented in 2007, the certification program promises to provide a reliable means for assessing and documenting practitioner competence at the full professional level.

NACP is currently working with CWLA and other interested organizations to identify and catalogue the existing CYC credentialing programs in North America. When this process is completed, meetings will be held in conjunction with regional CWLA conferences to begin discussions on establishing an integrated national credentialing system.

For additional information about the pilot testing program and competencies, visit www.acycp.org or contact:

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