

CHANGING TIMES

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In this issue of the Journal, readers will find new milestones marking the development of the profession of child and youth care. Each Journal issue is a snapshot of the thinking in the field as it exists at the time, and a retrospective look shows that much of that thinking has changed through the years. External symbols, the individuals listed in the masthead, or the topics contained in the table of contents, for example, signal the changes in the field.

The name of the association representing the interests of professional child and youth care workers in the United States was changed last year, during the 20th anniversary year of the birth of the organization. Formerly known as the National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations, the organization has been renamed as the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice. While this may seem to be a cosmetic and inconsequential change, a change in the identity of the profession lies behind the change in the name of the organization.

At some point in the past it occurred to many of us that calling an adolescent or young adult by the generic name of "child" was derogatory. We began to use the term "youth" to refer to these individuals, which seemed to describe more accurately that stage of life. Soon after, we realized that we were not "child care workers," but were "child and youth care workers." Meanwhile, the organization had evolved from an organization of state associations (NOCCWA) into an organization that represented the interests of state associations of child and youth care workers, individual child and youth care workers, and agencies or companies that provide child and youth care services.

Perhaps most significantly of all, however, many of us recognized that the national organization does not represent the workers themselves but instead sets professional standards for the practice of child and youth care. The new name, Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, embodies the true purposes of the organization: to advocate for professional standards in the field, establish credentialing standards for child and youth care practitioners, and to disseminate information about the field as it develops further.

Current efforts to set certification standards for child and youth care practitioners (through the North American Certification Project) focus on the skills and knowledge of the field rather than to the job titles of the individuals who practice in the field or the settings in which they practice. A child and youth care practitioner is a professional who uses the skills

and knowledge of child and youth care, whether that person is called youth worker, teacher, caseworker, mental health technician, child care worker, or some other title.

A change in name may seem like a small matter, but the field will move forward only as we can see the path in front of us. One way to clarify where we are heading is to name our group. Please join with the ACYCP as we move forward, changing as we go.