

COMPETENCY I: PROFESSIONALISM

Professional practitioners are generative and flexible; they are self-directed and have a high degree of personal initiative. Their performance is consistently reliable. They function effectively both independently and as team members. Professional practitioners are knowledgeable about what constitutes a profession and engage in professional and personal development and self-care. The professional practitioner is aware of the function of professional ethics, uses professional ethics to guide and enhance practice, and advocates effectively for children, youth, families, and the profession (Mattingly, Stuart, VanderVen, 2010, p.7).

The child and youth care (CYC) community in North America has lived out the above listed characteristics of professionalism in moving the field forward. Through significant professional volunteer effort and without any significant project funding, the substance and scope of CYC practice has been described (Stuart, 2009). The meaning and implication of the concepts of craft and profession have been discussed (Gharabaghi, 2010). Interaction among arenas of practice is underway.

The CYC knowledge base has developed significantly through practice descriptions, research findings, and theory building. Means for applying the knowledge through education and training have increased dramatically. CYC has developed significant expertise in transfer of training research and implementation. Educational credentials available in Canada range from a diploma through an undergraduate degree up to graduate training at the Ph.D. level. College and university programs are available in every province.

Mechanisms for professional communication have been developed and sustained. There is a strong set of CYC local, regional, national, and North American conferences. These are serious learning environments with depth of content and shared participation by practitioners, supervisors, trainers, and academics. There are active international CYC connections beyond North America. Field-specific journals publish work directly related to child and youth care. CYC-NET is a remarkable international child and youth care network with a list serve which makes the resources of the field much more readily available. Social networking sites facilitate practitioner discussions with an expanded array of colleagues.

Ethics discussions are active. Ethics sessions at conferences are becoming more common. The Texas Certification Institute has a process for practitioner ethics training and the training of ethics trainers. The Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) has just initiated a project to review and revise the ACYCP ethics code.

CYC has been active in writing and training focused on self-care and well-being. Field-specific stress and burnout research and writing exist. Responsibility for maintaining one's physical and mental health has been identified as both as an ethical responsibility and a competency of professional practice.

Competencies for professional CYC Practice have been developed. The Child and Youth Care Certification Board (CYCCB) has in place a professional-level practitioner certification process based on the competencies. Pilot project results on the certification assessment process and the effectiveness of certification for practice

quality have been published (Curry, et al., 2008). Certification for professional CYC practitioners has been available in Ontario and Alberta since 1980.

For this presentation the domain team has selected both foundational and cutting edge work from Canada and the United States. Magnuson addresses the necessity for establishing the moral foundation for CYC ethics work. He argues that such a moral vision provides the essential foundation for the effective application of ethics in practice. Standards for education, training and practitioners are central to a professional identity. Canadian CYC academics are engaged in a project to establish academic program accreditation standards. The CYCCB has just released a workforce report which incorporates CYC practitioner certification in the United States. These two seminal reports have been adapted for first publication here.

CYC in North America is marked by a rich productive relationship between colleagues in Canada and the United States. Through collaboration and mutual enrichment, significant strides have been made for both professional communities. Let us celebrate these achievements and turn our attention to the challenges of the future.

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