



THE ASSOCIATION OF
COUNSELLING THERAPY
OF ALBERTA

February 1, 2022

Honourable Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Children's Services, Co-chair, Child and Youth Well-Being Review Panel

Honourable Jason Copping, Minister of Health

Honourable Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education

MLA Matt Jones, Co-chair, Child and Youth Well-Being Review Panel

Dear Minister Schulz, Minister Copping, Minister LaGrange and MLA Jones:

RE: Recommendations in the Child and Youth Well-Being Report and Regulation of the Counselling Professions by the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta

We are writing to express our appreciation for the focus on children, youth and families related to the pandemic in the recent publication of the *Child and Youth Well-Being Review – Final Report*. It is clear in the report that COVID-19 has taken a toll on young people. It was recognized in the Report, that there will need to be enhancement in our communities to assist in overcoming the impacts that have been, and are still being, experienced.

The Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (ACTA) represents three professions - Counselling Therapists, Addiction Counsellors and Child and Youth Care Counsellors (CYCC) - which are integral in all efforts to build a healthier community. In order to provide services safely, these professions must be regulated by proclaiming the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA). This Government committed to proclaiming the CCTA, but the regulation has been delayed.

Of note, proclamation of the legislation along with the professional regulation coming into force will not cost the government any additional resources. In fact, the CCTA is ready to commence operations as soon as the Government signs the regulation into force.

The recommendations in the *Child and Youth Well-being Review – Final Report*, speak specifically to the knowledge, skills and practice areas that mental health professionals, CYCCs in particular, are educated and trained to support. At present, there are CYCCs with minimal education, no oversight, and no requirement to continue their competency training. Regulation would ensure that all CYCCs working with children and youth meet the competency requirements for the profession and would thereby significantly increase the likelihood that the following recommendations will be achieved, since there would be a standard of practice.

Recommendation #1 Advance existing and create new interventions and supports where necessary to help children and youth navigate the psychological, social, educational, and physical effects of the pandemic.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors are able to provide psychosocial interventions, which include cognitive and behavioural therapies that are designed to enhance psychological, emotional, social, and physical well-being. The standards of practice that have been developed by ACTA also define psychosocial intervention as a practice area. Regulation will bring this standard to all practicing Child and Youth Care Counsellors.

Recommendation #2 Review effectiveness and alignment of existing child and youth mental health and well-being programs and services to inform enhanced resource allocation.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors presently work in agencies that support the well-being of children, youth and families. They readily support effective services, and a regulated profession will increase effectiveness of services through standardized care. A standard of care provided to children, youth and families allows those who allocate resources to know their clients are receiving appropriate services for the funds provided.

Recommendation #3 Create available, streamlined and universally accessible pathways to connect children, youth, and families with mental health services and supports.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors are educated to provide psychosocial interventions and mental health support. CYCCs work in a variety of settings such as congregational care, schools, mental health facilities, community, recreation programs and justice settings. Regulation of CYCCs will ensure high-quality mental health services are readily available in a variety of settings. Having CYCCs readily available facilitates universal access to those in need of services.

Recommendation #4 Recognize and enhance the essential role of schools in interdisciplinary wraparound services and supports for mental health and well-being of students.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors work in school settings and Child and Youth Care agencies provide wraparound services. CYCCs are well positioned to be placed in every school in this province and are educated to provide the wraparound services as part of an interdisciplinary team.

Recommendation #5 Create more opportunities for children and youth to have improved access to cultural, sports, arts, and recreational activities.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors work in community and recreation programs and have education in providing planned activities to enhance mental wellness.

Recommendation #6 Support existing and implement new province-wide efforts where necessary to support food security for children, youth, and their families.

When Child and Youth Care Counsellors are educated, they learn about the Social Determinants of Health, and how to intervene. Many CYCCs work with street inclined and entrenched youth who are food insecure. They already know the ways in which services for these youth can be enhanced, and how to best reach them. CYCCs are aware of appropriate support services and can make referrals to assist in food security.

Recommendation #7 Advance existing and create new supports where necessary for those adults who are helping children and youth to navigate adverse experiences during the pandemic.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors presently support children, youth and families who have had adverse experiences. They are educated in trauma-informed care and the necessary interventions to be supportive. However, many educated CYCCs work alongside uneducated and unskilled workers because this profession is not regulated. Minimally educated workers can add to the stress and risk associated with providing service when they do not align with proper practice standards. Regulating the counselling professions will advance and create intrinsic support for those already supporting children, youth and families engaged in services.

Recommendation #8 Explore and activate ways to better track, measure, and understand the learning impacts of the pandemic and inform decisions to strengthen school capacity to respond.

Child and Youth Care Counsellors are able to support the collection of and tracking of data to understand the impact of the pandemic on children. As noted, earlier CYCCs already work in some schools and can be positioned well to assist in learning needs that have been interrupted by the pandemic. Regulation ensures CYCCs have appropriate education in order to do so.

Recommendation #10 Accelerate and utilize data collection, collaboration, and innovation to better assess child and youth development and enhance decision making related to their well-being and resiliency

A regulated profession that provides standardized care makes it easier to measure service provision and implement innovations. Regulation will ensure that CYCCs meet the competency standards necessary to understand developmental theory and use data to better assess child and youth development.

Thank you for considering the ways that the regulation of the counselling professions, Child and Youth Care Counsellors in particular, will help ensure the recommendations in the *Child and Youth Well-being Review – Final Report*, are realized. We would be happy to make ourselves

available for further discussion about the important role of regulation of the counselling professions in the well-being of our communities.

Respectfully,

Dr. Patricia Kostouros, MA., R Psych, CCYCC, ACTA Board Director

Michelle Breigel, M Ed, CCYCC, ACTA Board Director

Leighton Sealey, BA CCYCC, ACTA Board Director

Nicole Imgrund, MPS, MDiv, ACTA Board Chair and CCTA President

Linda Sahli, BA, JD, ACTA/CCTA CEO and Registrar