



HISTORY OF CERTIFICATION

CYC Certification programs began to appear in the United States and Canada in the early 1970s largely in the residential sector of the field. By 1985 child care certification programs had been implemented in many states and provinces including: Oregon, Washington, California, Arizona, Wisconsin, Ohio, Virginia, Alberta, and Pennsylvania. The proliferation of certification programs supported the notion that many groups recognized the importance and promise of credentialing efforts, based on identified core competencies, coupled with a credible competence demonstration.

These early programs suffered from some notable limitations, including: 1) implementation in small geographic areas and in only one or two practice settings which limited recognition of the credential; 2) variability in the recognized competencies and the competence demonstration approaches which limited transferability across cities, states, provinces, and international borders; 3) in some cases costs to become certified exceeded practitioners' ability to pay which limited access to the credential; 4) credentials typically offered only one entry level certification with no connection to higher levels of certification or advanced professional preparation which limited career pathways and advancement; and 5) lack of state, provincial and federal regulatory mandates that required practitioners to be certified to be employed. These issues severely limited the benefits that these early programs provided to practitioners.

Over the 15 year period preceding 2000, many of these programs closed while many new certification programs were implemented in the after school and youth development sectors. These programs emerged in Connecticut, Maryland, Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota. Arkansas, Illinois, Maine, Vermont, and Virginia completed some work on creating certification programs that were not fully implemented. Maine implemented a residential certification. All of these new certification efforts suffered from the same limitations as previous programs and have not been able to bring the benefits of certification to an adequate scale to address wide-spread gaps in workforce preparation.

In 1995 the Texas Youth and Child Care Worker Association established the first multilevel, cross-sector, certification program that used a standardized testing approach. This was the first time that: 1) knowledge and skill competencies from multiple practice settings were analyzed to identify core competencies that spanned settings; 2) a multi-level (3 level) certification ladder was offered aligned with critical periods in the professional development process (one year, three years, and five years); and 3) a standardized, normed exam was used to contain costs, increase accessibility, and create an equitable method for competence demonstration.

In 1998 the North American Certification Project (NACP) was initiated by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) (formerly the National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations (NOCCWA) and the International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care (ILCPCYC). This 10 year unfunded project carried out by over 100 volunteer practitioners in the United States and Canada created: 1) a description of the field of child and youth care (CYC) practice; 2) the Standards for Practice of North American CYC Professionals (the first unified, cross sector code of ethics to emerge in the field); 3) the Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practice (2002) (the most comprehensive compilation and analysis of competencies across major CYC practice settings conducted to date); 4) the CYC-P certification program (the most rigorous multi-method CYC competence demonstration implemented to date); and 5) a credible research effort which validated the certification program, it's competencies, demonstration methods and outcomes.

The work of the NACP was pivotal in establishing the importance of leadership from the professional community in evolving the various practice settings within the field of child and youth care into the unified profession of child and youth care work. The cross sector framework they created provided the necessary foundation upon which to build the unified profession. In addition, for the first time, the attitudes, knowledge and skill competencies of a fully prepared practitioner were identified.

These contributions revolutionized the profession by creating a widely recognized vision of the field with a clear definition of a unified profession composed of discrete practice settings which share core knowledge and skill competencies while maintaining the uniqueness demanded by work in varying application environments, and ethical standards which identify key principles and standards to guide ethical practices. Defining the characteristics of a fully prepared practitioner opened career pathways beyond entry level practice and established a road map to guide professional development over the full span of a practitioner's career.

The ethics code is now adopted and recognized by the ACYCP and the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations, and by all state and provincial professional CYC associations in North America. The CYCCB certification program is currently the most widely implemented CYC certification program in North America.

In 2008, ACYCP created the Child and Youth Care Certification Board (CYCCB) to oversee, implement, and develop the national CYC-P Professional Practitioner Certification. Since its founding, CYCCB has: 1) provided leadership in revising the 2002 competency document; in 2010 work was completed to update language and practices to better reflect cross sector work; 2) implemented proctored test sites in many US states and four Canadian Provinces; 3) created a Canadian version of the CYC-P exam that is adjusted for culture, diversity, language and practices in Canada; and 4) integrated the CYC-P credential into the existing certification programs sponsored by state and provincial professional associations in Texas, Ohio, Wisconsin, Wyoming,

Louisiana, Florida, California, Indiana, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.

In 2017, CYCCB and the CYC Certification Institute created an agreement that licensed the Entry and Associate Certifications to CYCCB. This allowed for the integration of the CYC certification effort into a viable career development ladder under one umbrella organization. The Entry and Associate Certifications are currently only implemented in the US.

National & International Linked Professional Development

CYCCB sponsored meetings in 2012 with major national groups in the United States to explore the viability of establishing a coalition focused on CYC workforce issues. This led to the formation of the CYW Workforce Coalition composed of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP), CYC Certification Board (CYCCB), American Association of Children's Residential Centers (AACRC), National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS), National AfterSchool Association (NAA), and the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA).

The coalition is promoting the vision of individuals and organizations across the profession of child and youth work collaborating strategically to create a well-prepared and sustainable workforce aligned to meet the evolving needs of children, youth, families, and communities. Coalition members are working collectively to: 1) provide a national voice for the development of the child and youth work profession across practice settings; 2) link existing professional development systems; and 3) establish career pathways that promote an accessible, stable and competent workforce.

In 2015, CYCCB, ACYCP, and the University of Pittsburgh co-sponsored an international gathering of higher educators from child and youth work degree programs. The meeting was attended by representatives from colleges and universities in the US, Canada, and Scotland. Work was started on an integrated higher education system built on the Competencies for Professional CYW Practice (2010). Over time, this effort is expected to guide the development of a linked higher education system that offers widespread access to high quality child and youth work education.

For more information see Karen VanderVen's article "Advancing Child And Youth Work Through Professional Preparation: Proceedings Of The Summit On Higher Education In Child And Youth Work At The University Of Pittsburgh" (VanderVen, 2016).

Canadian Accreditation Efforts

Parallel to the certification efforts underway through the CYCCB, from 2000 through 2006 the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA) hosted a series of pre-conference meetings, at all national and international child and youth care

conferences, on professional regulation and the setting of standards for practice in child and youth care. This led to the creation of the Child and Youth Care (CYC) Educational Program Accreditation Task Force, through which a flexible model of accreditation for post-secondary Child and Youth Care programs in Canada was suggested as a mechanism to further the work of enhancing quality of care and service for children, youth and families in need of social, educational, and health interventions.

The work of the Task Force was continued with the development in 2010 of a founding board for Child and Youth Care (CYC) Educational Program Accreditation. The founding board created bylaws, and registered the organization. A critical path was developed toward full implementation of an educational accreditation program to support programs to produce quality graduates.

The founding board of directors registered and incorporated the Child and Youth Care Educational Accreditation Board of Canada (CYCEAB) in 2012. CYCCB is a founding partner. The work of the CYCEAB has been ongoing since that time and has begun accepting applications for accreditation. The Board began fully accrediting programs in 2016.