



Symposium on Counsellor Regulation: Summary of Proceedings

Counsellors and psychotherapists from across Canada gathered on Nov. 26 and 27, 2009 in Ottawa to discuss the mobility of their profession and the implications of regulation. The 2009 Symposium was designed to support an ongoing national dialogue within and between provincial counselling-related associations representing a diversity of counselling modalities with a view to sharing areas of professional consistency and common purpose. It was a platform to initiate a national dialogue that would inform each jurisdiction's planning, increase the cohesion of professional standards, and advance the mobility of the counselling profession.

This was the third such symposium. The first was organized and co-hosted by the British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors and the Canadian Counselling Association in 2005. The second was hosted by the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association and funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2008. The 2009 Symposium was also funded by HRSDC and included representatives from every province and one territory, and more than fourteen different specialty areas of the counselling profession. HRSDC is the Federal government department responsible for the Agreement on Internal Trade which affects professional regulation.

With such a national collaboration and inter-provincial consultations, the counselling profession has the potential to build unity in such core features as professional titles, scopes of practice, controlled or restricted acts, entry requirements, codes of ethics, and professional standards of practice. These points of professional identity and accountability are the foundation for the inter-provincial mobility of counselling professionals, professional identity and the confidence of the general public.

The Symposium had four key objectives:

- To give ownership of the results of the symposium to a pan-Canadian group who are willing to take results back to their communities and play a coordinating and advocacy role.
- To expand awareness of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) and the boundaries that it imposes on regulatory realities across all jurisdictions.
- To provide participants with a basic understanding of the issues related to professional mobility and to fully discuss and explore them.
- To develop consensus across the country for a nationally representative group to develop supportive materials for the use of provinces and territories as they seek regulation. These materials may also serve as a core set of principles that increase the mobility of labour across Canada by simplifying and streamlining the regulatory process.

The main areas of discussion during the Symposium were: codes of ethics and standards of practice, definitions of and scopes of practice, and professional regulation issues and systems.



Participants received brief summary discussion papers pertaining to these areas before the Symposium and discussed them in depth.

The traditional use of credentials versus competencies and how these could be harmonized to meet the requirements of the Agreement on Internal Trade was also discussed. This topic was presented through a panel discussion and PowerPoint presentation.

Critical process steps for moving forward the development of common codes of ethics, standards of practice and scopes of practice forward were the main discussion on the final afternoon of the Symposium. A number of steps were outlined for each area and are summarized below.

- Code of ethics and standards of practice:
 - Synthesize research undertaken regarding existing codes of ethics and standards of practice for counselling-related professions
 - Use plain language where appropriate
 - Draft a generic code of ethics for professional feedback
- Definitions of, and scopes of practice for counselling and psychotherapy
 - Synthesize research undertaken regarding existing definitions and scopes of practice for counselling-related professions
 - Establish core elements and common language
 - Draft a generic scope of practice for professional feedback
- Professional regulation
 - Assemble a nationally representative group to develop supportive materials for the use of provinces and territories as they seek regulation

The final discussions at the Symposium centered on communicating the vision of a national professional identity to members of the counselling and psychotherapy profession, as well as the public, through individual groups and by the development of a website. This plan will assist in the advancement of a national identity or brand and enhance our relationship with such bodies as the Canadian Mental Health Commission. A nationally-representative core working group will continue this effort and apply for a further financial grant to enable the process to continue.