

National Symposium on Labour Mobility for the Counselling Profession 2011

Since 2007, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA), with the support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), has been engaged in specific projects related to the mobility of the counselling profession in Canada. From the bilingual validation of professional competencies, definitions, titles, scopes of practice, to new research on a framework for a code of ethics/standards of practice, and a national competency assessment for the profession, CCPA continues to undertake national research and development activities to ensure that appropriate tools and supporting materials that have a pre-established national consensus are available to existing and emerging statutory and self-regulatory colleges and associations across the country. These tools and materials are designed to enhance the mobility of members of the counselling profession and are focused on finding areas of convergence that support increased sharing of understandings amongst the various provinces and territories in Canada.

Part of this research and development process includes building partnerships, developing communication networks and strategies, and bringing together stewards of the pan-Canadian counselling community to discuss their needs. The most recent version of the "As was Said" Report from the 2011 National Symposium on Counsellor Mobility is the result of a two-day conference hosted by CCPA and held in Ottawa on April 7 and 8. In it you will find a summary of presentations, discussions, and activities that reflect a pan-Canadian presentation team and a pan-Canadian audience. Please feel free to share this document with individuals or organizations that you feel would benefit from learning more about the pan-Canadian status of the counselling profession.

Context

From 2008 to 2010, the Project Working Group (PWG) on Labour Mobility researched the variety of titles, definitions and scopes of practice for the counselling profession in Canada and around the world. Based on this research, the PWG developed a bilingual online survey in 2010 and circulated it to all counselling and counselling related organizations in the nation. The survey asked a number of demographic and professional attribute questions and then presented research-based titles, a definition and a scope of practice, and asked respondents to rate the degree of their agreement with how well each of the three items reflected their professional identity and core beliefs. Individuals and organizations participated in the survey from all provinces and territories of Canada.

Purpose

The PWG wanted to determine areas of alignment between provincial and territorial titles, scopes of practice, and definitions that could become the foundation for an overarching national framework to enhance labour mobility.

Results

Demographics

- 46 Organizations and 1,146 individuals responded to the survey.
- 25.8% of respondents had been in practice 5 years or less; 15.5% for more than 20 years.
- 595 (42.0%) respondents were in private practice; 397 (28.0%) worked in schools and universities; agencies and health care settings accounted for most of the rest.

Titles

In Canada, there are 12 titles¹ that have been identified provincially through regulatory processes. These titles were listed in the survey. More than 70 different preferred professional titles other than those mandated by regulation were provided by respondents. Of these preferred titles, registered psychotherapist, counselling therapist, and clinical counsellor were the most popular.

¹ counselling therapist (BC, NS, NB); psychotherapist (ON, BC); mental health therapist (ON); conseiller/conseillère d'orientation (QC); marriage and family therapist (QC); career counsellor (NB); orienteur (QC); orienteur professionnel (QC); psychoéducateur (QC); registered clinical counsellor (BC); counsellor (QC), and vocational guidance counsellor (QC).

Definition of Counselling and Scope of Practice

The survey provided respondents with a research-based definition of counselling and scope of practice. In both the definition and the scope of practice sections of the survey, responses showed consistently over 93% agreement, and always less than 4% disagreement. This is a remarkable expression of near-consensus, demonstrating that while our places of work, job titles, ages, modalities, and client bases show an amazing diversity, we have a rock-solid core identity as a profession.

Nationally Validated Definition:

Counselling is a relational process based upon the ethical use of specific professional competencies to facilitate human change. Counselling addresses wellness, relationships, personal growth, career development, mental health, and psychological illness or distress. The counselling process is characterized by the application of recognized cognitive, affective, expressive, somatic, spiritual, developmental, behavioural, learning, and systemic principles.

Nationally Validated Scope of Practice

The counselling profession:

- *Is attentive to and responds to diversity and inclusiveness;*
- *Works in the best interest of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations, communities, and the public-at-large;*
- *Works in the domains of cognition, emotion, expression, somatics, human development, behaviour, learning, and interactive systems;*
- *Promotes mental health by developing and enhancing:*
 - *Personal, relational, sexual, career, and spiritual growth and well-being,*
 - *Personal awareness and resources,*
 - *Decision-making and problem solving;*
- *Remediates or provides treatment for disorders in cognitive, behavioural, interpersonal, and emotional functioning;*
- *Applies specific and recognized evaluation and assessment methods;*
- *May also include supervision, education, training, consultation, research, diagnosis,*

Conclusion

These findings are a crucial anchor-point for our profession. They allow us to assert that we are not a collection of identities but rather, we are one profession with the capacity to be inclusive and embrace diversity by sharing a singular core belief about the definition of counselling and its scope of professional activities.