



Caring and Safe Schools

Bill Byrd, Coordinator, Caring and Safe Schools

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December 29, 2017

TO : Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care
Christine Gaitens, President of the Board
Ryerson University, 350 Bond Street, Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

FROM : BILL BYRD
Safe Schools Administrator
Toronto District School Board

RE : Support to the OACYC in its efforts to ensure that child and youth care becomes a legislated and regulated profession in Ontario

I am very pleased on behalf of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and particularly the Caring and Safe Schools Office of the TDSB to provide this letter of support for your association's efforts to seek recognition as a regulated profession in Ontario. Over my more than 40 years of work with at-risk youth in this province, I can totally attest to the professionalism, commitment to youth and the incredible ability to work with our very diverse student populations that we get from our child and youth care practitioners (Child and Youth Workers, Child Care Workers, Child and Youth Counsellors). In most instances they provide front line supports to the most vulnerable children, youth and parents whether in our regular class programs, special education programs, alternative programs and schools or our treatment programs which operate in concert with numerous community treatment agencies. Many youth workers also provide invaluable support directly to the communities connected to our many schools. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest school board and the most diverse school system in Canada. Child and Youth care practitioners have worked successfully with large numbers of our hardest-to-serve populations.

I have personally worked with, supervised, hired, and collaborated with many youth workers in my varied career: I currently work with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) as the Administrator of Safe Schools and I am also the senior trainer for the Canadian Safe Schools Network (CSSN). Before joining the school system, I was Head of Treatment for 7 years at the Earlscourt Child and Family Center (now the Child Development Institute), a children's mental health center in Toronto. Presently I Chair the Board of Directors of Central Toronto Youth Services, a long-standing Mental Health Center serving inner-city youth located in downtown Toronto. In all of these positions, I can say with certainty that we could not have managed without the incredible dedication and commitment of Child and Youth Workers and Child and Youth Counsellors. The youth workers in these programs like in other programs are equally as valuable as the teaching staff. For most of the students in these types of programs, their academic deficiencies and needs are very much secondary to their social, emotional, and psychological concerns which are attended to by youth workers who keep the students on track, keep them in school, and motivate them to learn.

In my opinion, like all professionally regulated bodies in Ontario, the accreditation and regulation of large groups of professionals adds to and ensures the high standards which the OACYC currently expects and seeks from its members. Professional regulation will just be one more means to ensure that our needy and in many respects more vulnerable children and youth will be properly serviced and supported. The TDSB literally has 1000s of young people on a daily basis whose needs cannot be met by just professionals (including) teachers, psychologists and social workers. The child and youth care providers are the other leg that is needed to meet the on-going social/emotional needs of these youth. Surely if we have professional regulation to ensure high standard of competencies for such varied professionals as dentists, foresters, respiratory therapists, sugar technologists and veterinarians then we should have them for those who work with our kids on a hands-on basis every single day. Professional accreditation will ensure that our students are never compromised and that all youth care providers have a regulated and clarified set of standardized competencies to help them maintain the high standards of care and support that our young people deserve.

On behalf of the TDSB and particularly on behalf of those who work in the Caring and Safe Schools Office, we wish the Association the very best in their attempts to have appropriate legislative changes to allow child and youth care providers to be named and regulated as a professional body.

Bill Byrd
Caring and Safe Schools Administrator