



February 16, 2017

Mr. Irwin Elman

The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth
401 Bay Street, Suite 2200
Toronto, Ontario M7A 0A6
Phone: (416) 325-5669 Toll-free: 1-800-263-2841
Fax: (416) 325-5681 TTY: (416) 325-2648
Email: advocacy@provincialadvocate.on.ca

Dear Mr. Elman,

Re: Services to Young People in Ontario, the College of Psychotherapy, Regulation of CYCP

We would like to take this opportunity to express our grave concerns with regards to the impact of the Psychotherapy Act and the lack of action on regulating child and youth care practice in Ontario. As you know, Child and Youth Care Practitioners provide front line support to the most vulnerable children and youth, within children's mental health agencies, residential treatment facilities, hospitals, schools, and various community based social services. Child and Youth Care Practitioners offer support through relational, restorative, evidence based practices, life space intervention, social skill development and crisis management. Child and Youth Care Practitioners work in the spaces where children and youth and their families live their lives. We work to promote mental health and wellbeing through education and direct support in the moment, often in high risk situations. Our scope of practice is unique and our work includes psychotherapy technique, however many Child and Youth Care Practitioners do not qualify for the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario.

Over the last year, media investigations have raised serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and youth in care in Ontario. We have heard from youth through many different forums, including the report from the Provincial Advocates Office, *Searching for Home*; the report of the Expert Panel, *Because Young People Matter*, and at listening tables including the recent "HairStory: Beyond Our Hair – Black Youth Unite for A.R.T.S (A Right to Speak)". Young people have asked for change. They have asked for better care within the system and when leaving care. We agree with the young people. They deserve better care.

They have also asked for Child and Youth Care Practitioners to be legislated (Searching for Home). Legislation of our field will support efforts to increase safety and improve the overall care and wellbeing of children and youth. It will also lead to reduced serious incidents in residential care while improving the response to these incidents when they do occur. Legislation will improve our abilities to do the best work we can do in the many other sectors in which we work including schools and hospitals.



This is now a serious situation for children's mental health and child and youth care practice. The OACYC has been requesting a college to ensure safety and best services to children and youth. The government has not responded to our requests. Please see our 2015 report "Safeguarding the Other 23 Hours: Legislation of Child and Youth Care Practice in Ontario". <http://oacyc.org/legislation/the-proposal>

The combination of the psychotherapy act and having no professional college that legislates the work of child and youth care practitioners will result in a variety of issues. These could include the closing of programs, the termination of employment of some of our experienced, valued, and established staff, and an increase in wait times. Additionally, this will effect budgets due to the cost of hiring new differently trained staff members who will require additional professional development to ensure they can perform some of the work of the professional child and youth care practitioner.

The result is likely a serious disruption in service delivery as child and youth care practitioners are no longer able to do their jobs, the jobs they were trained to do at Ontario Colleges and Universities. As essential members of the multidisciplinary teams across sectors, our work is valued and important to providing for the mental health needs of our young people.

At a time when we should be increasing supports, this situation will in fact decrease available supports to children who are already waiting far to long for urgent mental health services. This will impact service provision in hospital settings, schools, youth justice services, community service programs and residential care facilities which will likely then put additional pressure on the children's mental health services.

We have asked the Provincial Government of Ontario to consider this situation and to allow an exemption to the Psychotherapy Act for Child and Youth Care Practitioners working within the scope of practice as outlined by the OACYC and the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Workers, as we pursue our own college to legislate our work in its entirety to provide the best and safest services for young people.

We are asking for your support to ensure that all of those who have trained in Ontario to be valuable team members in the provision of mental health services to our young people can continue to provide these services in a timely and meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Christine Gaitens
President of the Board