

The Regulation of Counselling Therapy in Newfoundland-Labrador 2018

FACT-NL Steering Committee



Introduction

The Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Newfoundland-Labrador (FACT-NL) is the provincial voice of member associations who are pursuing the regulation of Counselling Therapy under the Health Professions Act.

Our aim is to establish a provincial College which will protect the title of Registered Counselling Therapists will promote and ensure public protection, accessibility and accountability in our profession.

FACT NL will submit an application for regulation to the Department of Health and Community Services in the coming months.

FACT- NL membership consists of the following associations:

- AAMFT – American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
- AAMT- Atlantic Association for Music Therapy
- CAMFT - Canadian Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
- CASC – Canadian Association for Spiritual Care
- CATA – Canadian Art Therapy Association
- CCPA – Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
- CPCA – Canadian Professional Counsellors Association
- NLCPA – Newfoundland and Labrador Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association
- NADTA- North American Drama Therapy Association

Collectively, this group of associations represents approximately 400 practitioners and over 50 years of knowledge and expertise in the area of counselling therapy.

Because membership in an association is voluntary, there are limited processes by which to monitor the competency standards and requirements for practicing in this field.

While holding a certified or registered membership in an association does necessitate that members maintain professional educational credits and follow a code of ethics/ standards, “general members” of an association would not need to maintain these standards as strictly. Without regulation of the profession, there are limited means by which to administer correction or disciplinary measures for those who engage in incompetent, unethical, or impaired practice. This may place the public and consumer at higher risk when seeking counselling services from un-regulated professionals.

Because of the complex knowledge and competencies required by this profession, it is recommended that Counselling Therapists become regulated to protect the public from undue harm.

Some provinces in Canada have already gained regulation for the practice of Counselling Therapy with title protection. Provinces in which this profession is currently regulated include: Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. While Ontario and Quebec use the term Psychotherapist, the Atlantic Provinces are on- stream with utilizing the title of Registered Counselling Therapist. Alberta, PEI and BC are in active discussions with their provincial governments to proceed with regulation.

In the last 4 years, FACT-NL representatives have met with the Honourable Dr. John Haggie, Minister of Health and Community Services, as well as the Regulatory Consultant for this department and the Exec. Director of the Council for Health Professionals. During these meetings and consultations, it is evident that we have gained recognition for the benefits of regulating the profession in NL, as well as respect for the role our members play in primary health care and mental health as a whole.

FACT NL is dedicated to ongoing consultation and advice with these various advisors which will help ensure that our application process is sound. We continue to maintain a diverse and representative group of professionals who are dedicated to this endeavor.

What does a Counselling Therapist do?

The profession of Counselling Therapy, fits within a comprehensive model of services while working in a variety of settings. Counselling Therapists provide services for a full range of clients. The work is done within the client's context, providing supportive interventions that promote the optimal development, functioning and growth of the client. This is done by focusing on the strengths of the client across social, economic, cognitive, spiritual, cultural, and behavioural domains. While this profession may augment the work of other similar professions, the role of our members does not seek to replace or mimic the work of existing regulated professionals.

In addition to "talk therapy" interventions, some Counselling Therapists may have additional certification in the use of creative arts therapies (music, art, and drama), play therapy, guided imagery, spiritual care and a myriad of other

proficiencies. Growth is accomplished using the most appropriate treatment modality to achieve competency, health and wellness, thus allowing the client to avail of the right help at the right time.

The overall goal of a Counselling Therapist is to provide an opportunity for people to work toward living more with more satisfaction and while utilizing existing resources. Counselling Therapists often address wellness, personal growth and career development, as well as overall mental wellness through prevention & intervention. Counselling Therapists emphasize a client's wellbeing and focus on strengths.

Why Regulate This Profession?

The goal of regulation is to reduce the risk of harm to the public while maximizing the well-being of the client. We recognize that self-regulation is a privilege that requires the profession to act in the public interest. A key objective is for the profession to set standards of practice and codes of ethics.

Risk of harm to the public is possible when an unregulated professional practices within a complex profession. A regulated practitioner would have a code of ethics, a professional standard of practice, and training in clinical skills that would allow them to counsel clients in a comprehensive way, while mitigating risk of harm or un-ethical practice decisions.

Regulated practitioners receive training in counselling skills and methods in order to provide appropriate and ethical counsel to clients. They are also trained as to when and how to make the appropriate referrals to physicians and other mental health

professionals, working collaboratively for the client.

The Difference Regulation Will Make in Newfoundland-Labrador

In 2017, the Government of NL released their report “Towards Recovery- Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan”. This was developed in response to our government’s vision for a renewed mental health and addictions system. Within the 54 Recommendations made in this plan, the regulation of Counselling Therapy in this province would help fulfill several of the goals of these endeavors. This includes the ability to fulfill a more cohesive role in prevention, early intervention improving service access and collaboration in our Mental Health system.

In a regulated landscape, we would see Counselling Therapists who could offer additional services within health care and the community, through marriage and family therapy, spiritual care, music therapy, and play therapy, (to name a few). The public would benefit from the **increase in information sharing and coordination of care, that makes for a more holistic and less fragmented experience of health care**. With an increase in collaboration, the public needs would be better served and would boost confidence in our mental health system, thereby reducing stigma around mental illness and recovery.

As Counselling Therapists, mental health and addictions professionals would work to the full scope of their practice, we would help to ensure that clients/ public could receive **the right care, at the right time and from the right people**. The cost savings from triaging people's needs

appropriately and utilizing a wider range of services could be significant.

As recommended in a stepped care approach, this “would help increase access to services by matching mental health needs to the most appropriate level of care”. (* as *recommended in The Way Forward report*). This would include utilizing experts and para-professionals like counsellors, who could also offer preventative and supportive therapy.

Increased access to a range of counselling services would also mean that wait times for mental health care would be significantly reduced. Research indicates that finding the right “fit” for the professional and the methods of treatment results in more positive outcomes.

Having more available professional services would also allow for Rural residents to have greater and improved access to counselling services in their own community, either in-person or via video counselling, (* *such as Therapy Assistance Online and similar programs that meets the standards of best practice for secure use of technology.*)

The public would be better protected, obtain quality services, have more diverse choice of treatment and attain better outcomes for those receiving therapeutic services in NL if this profession was regulated.

While it is recognized that there is some overlap scopes of practice for those practitioners who offer mental health services (Counselling Therapists, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social Workers), it is also recognized that each of these groups would work more effectively together in the creation of an integrated mental health care system.

By regulating the profession of Counselling Therapy, the public would be aware that a Registered Counselling Therapist has recognized competencies and adheres to a code of ethics and standards of practice which can contribute to their care. The public would also have a regulatory body/ Health Professions Council to whom they could report incompetent, unethical or impaired practices, and that any issues of concern will be investigated and resolved.

Employers in Newfoundland-Labrador would also benefit from the regulation of Counselling Therapists. While Certified or registered professionals currently work in private practice while insured through associations, Regulation could widen the availability of coverage for the public with insurance companies. Employers could save money and add to their available staff resources with a broader professional workforce.

Cost of Regulation

The regulation of Counselling Therapists would not result in any additional financial obligations nor increase government costs.

The administration and oversight of the college is carried out by the NL Council of Health Professionals, for which members would pay a portion of their fees. The Council is well established and an arms-length entity that is financially self-sustained.

It is likely that increased preventative care and early intervention will reduce the cost of acute mental health and addiction services in Newfoundland-Labrador, not to mention the cost savings from treating the myriad of

physical illnesses caused by stress and poor mental health.

In Summary

Counselling Therapists are a vital part of primary healthcare in Newfoundland-Labrador. The work of Counselling Therapists is increasingly complex. As a part of ensuring the highest possible quality of care and support to our public, a strong program of standardized competencies is required. **Regulation of the profession will increase the protection of the public, the Government and for Counselling Therapists themselves.**

Regulating this profession will result in:

- Standardization of Counselling Therapy in Newfoundland-Labrador, with an easily recognized and protected title;
- A wider range of quality, cost effective counselling services throughout NL;
- A regulated body for the public to report incompetent, unethical or impaired practices, who can take investigative and corrective actions to protect the public from further harm;
- Creating additional solutions to help Government of NL achieve the recommendations in the “The Way Forward: Towards Recovery Report” for Mental Health and Addictions.

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See our website at:

www.fact-nl.org