
A Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Position Paper for the Provision of Counselling Services

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Abstract

This paper presents the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Associations' position statement regarding counselling services. More specifically, the paper places the evolution and current status of the position statement in historical perspective, articulates a rationale for the provision of counselling services, and describes the commitment of C.G.C.A. to meeting the needs of Canadian society.

Résumé

Cet article présente la position de la société Canadienne d'orientation et de consultation en ce qui concerne les services de counseling. Plus précisément, l'article situe l'évolution et le status actuel de cette position dans une perspective historique, formule un principe de base pour l'organisation de services de counseling, et décrit le mandat de la SCOC pour répondre aux besoins de la Société Canadienne.

Introduction and Background to the Position Paper

This paper builds upon and reframes a previous statement created for C.G.C.A. by Wallace, Studd and Ringwood in 1982. The rationale for their position statement was based on

requests to have a 'standard' or 'reference point' for guidance and counselling in Canada. The intent of the paper was to provide a statement of the basic needs of Canadians and the services which should be provided through C.G.C.A. members in order to meet these needs. The focus would be on competencies both for counsellors and for those receiving the services. The intent was not to outline a prescriptive program nor to provide the 'how to'. (p. 1)

Although Wallace et al. (1982) did provide a rationale for counselling in Canada, reactions to their statement indicated it was perceived by various groups within the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association as having limited scope. A common perception was that while these authors emphasized in general terms the need for a multi-faceted, developmental orientation as a basis for counselling services, the major emphasis within the paper was on the vocational-career-work-employment aspects of the developmental spectrum. It was generally believed that while the paper did an excellent job of delineating the vocational-career dimensions of counselling, it was, at the same time, in need of revision to explicate other important aspects of human development.

A new committee was formed to work on a more comprehensive position paper. Members of that committee included Glenn Sheppard, William Coulthard, Rod Conklin, Frank Van Hesteren and Walt Paw-

lovich. Pawlovich, who was at the time President-Elect of C.G.C.A., and Van Hesteren agreed to construct the framework for the final position statement (see Van Hesteren and Pawlovich, 1986). Their framework reflected a synthesis of the views of the previous position paper, the reactions of various C.G.C.A. members to the original position paper, the School Trustees' Position Paper on School Guidance (1981), relevant counselling literature, and the authors' own views and experiences.

The working document was presented to the Board of Directors of C.G.C.A. in June, 1986 during the Association's Biennial Conference and it was presented as a Conference program session. During this Conference session, those in attendance had an opportunity to react to the substance and direction of the paper and to make suggestions for its improvement. Their reactions were influential in preparing a draft that was endorsed in principle by the C.G.C.A. Board of Directors at its January, 1987 meeting. The Board of Directors sent a copy of the paper to each member of the Association with an invitation to make comments. The Position Statement which follows represents the final version of the C.G.C.A. Position Paper for the Provision of Counselling Services.

A POSITION STATEMENT FOR THE CANADIAN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION¹

The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association believes human needs form the basis of counselling services. Members of the Association are committed to providing counselling services that meet the needs of Canadians through a broad spectrum of roles and functions and in a variety of settings. Among the contexts within which counsellors provide their services are: elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, employment and recruitment agencies, apprenticeship and occupational training programs, crisis centres and protective agencies, medical and hospital settings, private practice, industry and social service agencies.

Association members provide their services to a wide variety of clientele by way of fulfilling three interrelated functions: counselling, consulting, and coordinating. In carrying out the counselling function, counsellors assist individuals and groups in acquiring the understandings and decision-making skills needed to constructively deal with the developmental tasks of various life stages. In carrying out the consulting function, counsellors share their particular knowledge and expertise with others who, in turn, are in a position to meet the counselling needs of various clientele. Finally, in carrying out the coordinating function, counsellors attempt to orchestrate the efforts of various helping professionals and available community resources in meeting the needs of clients. The counselling profession shares with related professions the

goal of optimizing the actualization of human potential. By virtue of their specialized training, their role definition, and their particular expertise in assisting individuals in meeting developmental tasks and developmental crises, counsellors have a unique contribution to make in working toward the attainment of this goal.

Over the years, the counselling profession has established and maintained its vitality and credibility by examining such issues as: the kind of society in which we are living; the future direction of society; the trends and conditions in contemporary society which relate to human needs; persons' needs to cope effectively with and live meaningfully and productively in society; and the purposes of counselling, as well as the functions and rolls of counsellors in meeting human needs.

C.G.C.A. believes that as Canadians and as residents of the "global village," our lives are affected by many modern phenomena. These include unprecedented rates of change in various sectors of society and in the lives of individuals; unparalleled gains in knowledge generally and in science and technology in particular; and increasing influence of the mass media, especially television. These also include diversification of individual and collective values systems; and diversification of family patterns; changing economic conditions and vocational and occupations patterns; and continuing evolution toward a "global community" concept also have an important impact on our lives. C.G.C.A. believes that a developmental orientation serves as a framework for identifying and effectively meeting the kinds of needs implicit in the previous characterization of contemporary society. Within this orientation, human development is construed in a life-span, multi-faceted manner. It is considered to incorporate the psycho-social, psycho-sexual, intellectual-conceptual, moral, and career-vocational developmental dimensions and aspects of development pertaining to the tasks of meaning construction and dealing with existential issues. A broadly conceived "developmental orientation" is emphatically not intended to represent what might be regarded as a narrow, or even partisan, view with which only a limited number of our members can identify. On the contrary, the meaning intended by "developmental orientation" is such that any and all approaches to counselling might legitimately be regarded as helping individuals to move in the direction of the growth enhancing values embodied by it.

The adoption of a broad spectrum, life-span developmental emphasis for construing the counselling function is consistent with the following definition of counselling psychology services adopted by the American Psychological Association:

Counseling psychology services refer to services provided by counseling psychologists that apply principles, methods, and procedures for facilitating effective functioning during the life-span developmental process. In providing such services, counseling psychologists approach practice with a significant emphasis

on positive aspects of growth and adjustment and with a developmental orientation. These services are intended to help persons acquire or alter personal-social skills, improve adaptability to changing life demands, enhance environmental coping skills, and develop a variety of problem-solving and decision-making capabilities. Counseling psychological services are used by individuals, couples and families of all age groups to cope with problems connected with education, career choice, work, sex, marriage, family, other social relations, health, aging, and handicaps of a social or physical nature.

(American Psychologist, 1981, p. 654)

The developmental orientation of this Position Paper is not intended to ignore or diminish the importance of remedial and crisis intervention. Within a life-span developmental perspective, it is possible to adopt an eclectic approach that would incorporate and integrate developmental, remedial, and crisis kinds of counselling. Nor does the developmental orientation minimize the importance of career development and the associated concepts of vocation and occupation. In order for this paper to sustain a rationale for the provision of counselling services and to provide conceptual and definitional integrity as well as stability over time, the developmental orientation must include these areas.

The following section identifies, within a developmental perspective, the kinds of human needs that must be met if persons in the present and the emerging society are to aspire to a meaningful, fulfilling, and socially constructive life-style. The account of human needs represents a distillation and synthesis of the theorizing and research of a broad spectrum of thinkers who share a developmental orientation.

I. Infancy and Pre-School Years

1. Need to acquire a constructive and hopeful orientation to life through loving and nurturing relationships with significant others.
2. Need to acquire the capacity for self-regulation in areas such as locomotion, eating, and speaking.
3. Need to develop perceptually, linguistically, and intellectually as a foundation for living in general and for successful learning in the educational system in particular.
4. Need to begin to acquire the social-interpersonal understandings and skills required for entry into the educational system.
5. Need for life experiences that contribute to beginning to develop a positive sense of morality.

II. Middle Childhood

1. Need to develop a positive self-concept and to experience an abiding and optimally high level of self-esteem.

2. Need for self-awareness and self-understanding — including a sensitivity toward, and insight into, one's emotional experience and an awareness of one's strengths, potentials and limitations.
3. Need for understanding other people, being able to work cooperatively with them, and being able to understand the world from their point of view.
4. Need to begin to develop an understanding and appreciation of the significance of work in the lives of people and of the importance of eventually embarking upon a career that is personally meaningful and socially useful.
5. Need to begin to develop decision-making capabilities that can be applied in personal, social, educational, and vocational life areas.
6. Need for competency in the areas of literacy and numeracy — what have traditionally been termed the basic 3 R's but increasingly involving "learning how to learn" — as a basis for becoming a life-long learner.

III. *Adolescence*

1. A continuing need to grow in self-awareness and self-understanding in the direction of developing a positive sense of personal identity — including the need to develop a personally satisfying sex-role identification.
2. Need to further develop a personally meaningful and socially constructive value system that can serve as a guide to decision-making in various life-areas.
3. Need to understand normal adolescent physical-biological growth processes and basic aspects of human sexuality.
4. Need to achieve optimal emotional independence from parents and other adults.
5. Need to mature in relationships with peers of both sexes.
6. Need to understand the concept of marriage in contemporary society and to begin to anticipate the possibility of marriage and family life.
7. Need to capitalize upon one's expanding personal and intellectual-conceptual capabilities to understand how social, economic, political, and technological processes have an impact on the consciousness and lives of individuals and groups in society. (Including the need to understand the phenomenon of nuclearism and to constructively confront the spectre of nuclear holocaust).
8. Need to understand rapid societal change and to develop effective strategies for managing the stresses of modern living.

9. Need for knowledge concerning middle school and high school course/program offerings and program requirements as these relate to making decisions about further education and career choice.
10. Need to begin to discern occupational groupings and career areas which might provide a context for actualizing one's identity and realizing one's personal potential.

IV. *Early Adulthood*

1. Need to further develop a capacity for caring and intimate relationships with other people and to balance the need for autonomy and independence with the need to meaningfully connect in the network of social relationships.
2. Need to achieve emotional interdependence and to achieve an optimal level of knowledge, understanding, and tolerance of Canada's multi-cultural and bilingual society.
3. Need for understandings and life-skills required for assuming one's roles as a marriage partner, parent, and family manager.
4. Need to effectively launch into a career that is compatible with one's evolving sense of self and emerging life-style.

V. *Middle Age*

1. Need to re-examine the meaning of one's life and to determine and affirm life priorities that are in keeping with one's evolving sense of self.
2. Need to assume civic responsibility and to make a constructive contribution to one's society.
3. Need to experience a sense of consolidation in one's chosen line of work and to anticipate a continued actualization of one's potential within the context of one's career.
4. Need to adjust to the physiological-biological changes that characteristically accompany middle age.
5. Need to acquire the understandings and life-skills required for competently and responsibly raising teen-age family members.
6. Need to further round out one's lifestyle through the identification and cultivation of leisure activities.

VI. *Later Maturity*

1. Need to be able to reflect upon one's life with a sense of integrity, accomplishment, and pride.
2. Need for information, advice, and life-skills required for a satisfactory transition into later maturity and retirement.

3. Need for life-skills, coping strategies, and involvements that form the basis of a personally satisfying and socially useful retirement.
4. Need to adjust to declining physical strength and health.
5. Need to regard later maturity not so much as a closing out of one's active life in a career but as a further evolution of life-style that is potentially rich in opportunities for personally fulfilling and socially useful involvements.

While all persons are assumed to be characterized by the developmental needs identified above, there are people in Canadian society with particular needs that arise as a function of belonging to a particular societal sub-group.²

These groups and their unique needs include:

I. *Female Clients:*

1. Need to acquire knowledge of sex-stereotyping and non-traditional occupations, legislation and affirmative action programs.
2. Need to acquire the life skills necessary for coping with changing roles for women, and with sexual harassment.
3. Need to make decisions from among alternatives that include the non-traditional.

II. *Single Persons:*

1. Need to have single life recognized as a legitimate and meaningful life-style option.
2. Need for knowledge about careers that are particularly compatible with the single life-style option.
3. Need for knowledge and life-skills related to the fulfillment of the social-interpersonal needs of the single person.
4. Need for knowledge and life-skills geared to optimizing the satisfactions of single parent family life.

III. *Exceptional Clients and the Handicapped:*

1. Need to acquire a knowledge of legislation, their rights, schools and programs, and career opportunities related to their special needs or handicap.
2. Need to learn to cope with the exceptionality and to develop positive feelings about self despite the handicap.
3. Need to set goals, and make plans, to achieve a preferred lifestyle.

IV. *Native Peoples:*

1. Need to acquire a knowledge of native economic and employment strategies, as well as native education and training programs.
2. Need to develop learning skills and job orientation/job readiness skills so that they can qualify for various training and educational programs.
3. Need to learn to make decisions related to coping with life both in a native environment and in Canadian society in general.

V. *Prison Inmates:*

1. Need to acquire a knowledge of services and programs provided for ex-offenders.
2. Need to develop the special skills for coping with the transition from a prison environment to society.
3. Need to learn to make decisions consistent with rehabilitation.

VI. *Unemployed People:*

1. Need to acquire knowledge about educational, employment and training opportunities and trends, and information about financial resources available for training and/or relocation.
2. Need to acquire career planning skills together with the skills necessary to obtain and keep a job.
3. Need to learn to solve problems and make decisions related to career change.

VII. *Apprentices:*

1. Need to acquire knowledge about government regulations as they apply to trades training, union regulations, opportunities for future employment as well as a knowledge of computer technology in the trade.
2. Need to acquire the coping skills associated with learning and working simultaneously.
3. Need to learn to make decisions related to learning experiences which will facilitate development within the trade.

VIII. *Immigrants:*

1. Need to acquire a knowledge of the government regulations, education and training opportunities as they relate to working and living in Canadian society.

2. Need to develop special skills for coping with the transition from the country of origin to Canada.
3. Need to learn to solve problems and make decisions with respect to a new lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

If counselling services are to be provided in the spirit of the developmentally-oriented rationale depicted in this position paper, continuing efforts will be needed to ensure that counsellor preparation programs are oriented to the facilitation of optimal human development and that counsellor educators themselves are adequate to the task of helping counsellors in training to acquire developmental competence. In keeping with the interpretation of a broad "developmental orientation" adopted for this paper, any and all approaches to counsellor education are considered to be geared to understanding and facilitating optimal human development.

If the values pertaining to optimal human development and empowerment in the suggested rationale for the provision of counselling services are to be respected, a shift in orientation to carrying out counselling research will be required. Fortunately, there are promising signs that such a shift in the direction of methodological pluralism and balance in counselling research is occurring. Central to what some are going so far as to call a "paradigm shift" in counselling research is a focus on "human science" in which so-called "qualitative" research methodologies are emphasized that permit the direct exploration of human experience in a counselling context. The balanced and judicious use of *both* quantitative *and* qualitative research methodologies could contribute significantly to a better understanding of counselling process and outcome and, thereby, result in enhancing the effectiveness with which we provide counselling services.

If the goal of optimizing human potential is to be taken seriously, it will be incumbent upon counsellors to acquire cultural awareness and to develop a critical consciousness of the social, economic, political, and technological factors and processes which either facilitate or impede optimal human development. A major challenge presently facing the counselling profession has to do with discerning responsible and efficacious ways of becoming involved in societal-cultural and institutional change processes in a manner consistent with the optimal empowerment of people in Canadian society. Meeting this challenge will certainly entail continued and increasing involvement of the counselling profession in a variety of political processes and forums. It will also mean working toward mutual understanding and cooperation between the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association and various educational, community, and governmental agencies.

Accepting the challenge to become more developmentally focused in our orientation to counselling will place members of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association in the position of having to consider what optimal human functioning is and what the personal and social consequences of such functioning might be. We are being called upon to fathom the implications of having unprecedented numbers of "highly developed" individuals and groups in our society; people who live their lives in the spirit of characteristics which comprise higher levels of human development. This is at once an exciting and somewhat awesome task!

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Footnotes

- ¹ Readers interested in a more detailed and scholarly account of the philosophical-theoretical underpinnings of this position paper are referred to the paper entitled, "Toward a Revised C.G.C.A. Position Paper for the Provision of Counselling Services". This paper is available, upon request, from Frank Van Hesteren or Walt Pawlovich.
- ² The following account of the needs of special groups in Canadian society is taken from a previous position paper prepared for the Association by Jack Wallace, Dave Studd, and Carol Ringwood. It should be noted that the category "single persons" represents a new category. It was added as a result of taking into account suggestions for improving a previous draft of the position paper.

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