



FACT-Alberta

FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF COUNSELLING THERAPISTS IN ALBERTA



THE ASSOCIATION OF
COUNSELLING THERAPY
OF ALBERTA

Update on Regulation of Counselling
Therapists, Addictions Counsellors, and Child
and Youth Care Counsellors in Alberta

March 29, 2019



On December 11, 2018, Bill 30, The Mental Health Services Protection Act received Royal Assent. As a result, after many years of advocacy, the professions of Counselling Therapy, Addictions Counselling and Child and Youth Care Counselling were officially included in the Health Professions Act (HPA). A new **College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (CCTA)** will be formed to provide oversight and accountability, and protect the public when receiving mental health and addiction services.

This represents a time of significant transition for our professions. We know that even positive change can be challenging at times and so we expect there will be many questions and perhaps some anxiety as these changes unfold. However, we will continue to work together to ensure that the transition is as clear and straightforward as possible.

In Alberta, registration with CCTA is mandatory for professionals who are qualified to be regulated and providing health care services. Therefore, we expect over 4000 practitioners to apply for registration in the new College. If you are a practitioner, currently working as a Counselling Therapist, Addictions Counsellor, or Child and Youth Care Counsellor, we offer this information to help you understand what these changes mean for you and what work is being done on your behalf to establish the new College and prepare for registration.

Since the legislation was passed, FACT-Alberta has:

-  consulted with Alberta Health as they prepare the first draft of the regulations that will govern the College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta. (CCTA)
-  drafted the Standards of Practice
-  approved by-laws for ACTA, as well as for CCTA
-  assessed and made recommendations for certifications that meet the requirements for entry-to-practice competency for an Expedited Route into the College for practitioners

Next Steps

The Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (ACTA)

FACT-Alberta was established to advocate for regulation of the profession in Alberta. Members of FACT-Alberta are practitioner associations, with the Steering Committee being comprised of representatives from these associations. In order for a college to be established, we were asked by the Alberta government to create a single association, ACTA, which upon proclamation, will become the CCTA. Therefore, upon proclamation ACTA will be dissolved and CCTA will be created. Unlike FACT-Alberta, ACTA will be comprised of the individual practitioners who will follow the Expedited Route into the new College.

All of the Steering Committee members of FACT-Alberta now sit as the Directors for ACTA, thus ensuring ongoing representation for all of the practitioner associations that are members of FACT-Alberta. An Executive has been elected and these individuals, along with other newly elected members and public representatives, will also form the first Council of the new College.

- ✿ Chair, Nicole Imgrund
- ✿ Chair Elect, Laura Hahn
- ✿ Secretary, Sheila Killoran
- ✿ Treasurer, Olga Perju
- ✿ Member-at-Large (Counselling Therapy), Russ Webb
- ✿ Member-at-Large (Addictions Counselling), Sean Swaby
- ✿ Member-at-Large (Child and Youth Care Counselling), Patricia Kostouros

In the next few months, we hope to set up an office, records management system, and to hire staff to assist us in starting the process of accepting registrations for members of ACTA (those professionals who meet the requirements for the Expedited Route into the College).



Consultation and Timeline

ACTA will work with Alberta Health to complete the draft policy work to support regulation for the new College. Alberta Health will consult with stakeholders on the draft policy work in the future.

Stakeholders may include practitioner associations, educational institutions, other colleges within the Health Professions Act, other government departments, insurance providers and employers. Stakeholders will be provided with the draft policy work, as well as the proposed Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, and asked for feedback. Alberta Health will work with ACTA to make any necessary changes to these documents based on the feedback received.

The policy and regulation will need Cabinet approval. The timelines for these processes are uncertain and will need to be determined at a future date.

Cabinet will set a Proclamation date in consultation with ACTA for the opening of CCTA. The opening date of the College is uncertain, but likely to occur sometime between fall 2019 and fall 2020.

Registration

There are three registration routes: Expedited, Intermediate, and Regular. These routes will facilitate registration of practitioners already in the field. Expedited will occur before the College opens, and Intermediate will occur for a two year period after proclamation of the new College. The Regular route is the ongoing process of registration for individuals new to the field.

Expedited Route

-  Qualified practitioners will possess an approved certification. They will also have a minimum of 750 currency hours in the 3 years prior to applying, and 450 direct client hours over their career.
-  ACTA has assessed the current certifications of FACT-Alberta organizations and addictions counsellors in the province, to determine which ones meet the requirements for entry-to-practice competencies. Associations will have an opportunity to review this information and provide feedback to ACTA before the opening of the Expedited Route.

- ✿ Associations will notify members who have the approved certifications that they may apply for the Expedited Route. This information will also be posted on the ACTA and FACT-Alberta websites. Those who also have the required currency and direct client hours will qualify to apply for the Expedited Route.
- ✿ These practitioners, who include Counselling Therapists, Addictions Counsellors and Child and Youth Care Counsellors with recognized certifications, will apply to ACTA and upon proclamation, will become the first regulated members of CCTA.
- ✿ It is anticipated that ACTA will open the Expedited Route window in Summer 2019. The window will close prior to the proclamation of the College. As the proclamation date is uncertain, and we are unsure how far in advance we will be aware of this date, we advise professionals who wish to pursue this route to apply as soon as possible after the application process begins.

Intermediate Route

- ✿ The Intermediate Route will be available to all practitioners currently working in the field who did not apply through the Expedited Route. It may also include some practitioners who have one of the recognized certifications, but did not receive their certification prior to the closing of the Expedited Route window.
 - ✿ It is important to remember that continuity in the workforce is considered a priority for both the government and the profession. It is essential that the public does not lose access to qualified mental health professionals, and that qualified competent practitioners in the field have a process by which to enter the College.
 - ✿ Applications for the Intermediate Route may be made to the CCTA within the first two years after the College is proclaimed.
 - ✿ The specific educational, training, supervision and examination requirements for this route have been recommended by ACTA and will be finalized when the regulation is approved.
- The full criteria for Intermediate Route will be made available prior to the College opening,
- ✿ so that individuals have time to prepare their applications to demonstrate that they meet the entry-to-practice competencies. The College will consider any education, training, and experience that supports a practitioner's application.

- ✿ To qualify for Intermediate Route, practitioners will have a minimum of 750 currency hours in the 3 years prior to applying, and 450 direct client hours over their career.
- ✿ Applicants must pass a jurisprudence exam.

Regular Route

- ✿ The specific educational, training, supervision and examination requirements for this route have been recommended by ACTA. These entry-to-practice requirements will be finalized after the consultation with stakeholders is completed and when Cabinet approves the regulation.

Fees

Fees will be in the range of \$400-\$500 per year for those applying through the Expedited Route, which will be at a reduced rate. This will cover the first year of registration in the College.

FACT-Alberta

You may be wondering what will happen to FACT-Alberta now that its Steering Committee members are working as part of the new association, ACTA. It is important to remember that ACTA will no longer exist as soon as the College is proclaimed - ACTA will become the CCTA.

FACT-Alberta represents a unique entity in Alberta, as a collective of diverse associations who work together for the good of the public and the profession. With its mandate to bring about regulation in Alberta accomplished, FACT-Alberta will establish a new mandate. This mandate is yet to be decided, but will build on the exceptionally positive and effective relationships already established, to continue to advocate for the profession in Alberta. This mandate could include advocacy for third party billing. While all of the other associations will also continue their vital work in supporting their members, FACT-Alberta is an opportunity for them to join their voices when it makes sense to do so.

While the elected Board members of ACTA will move on to form the Council of the new College, the other Directors will continue to support FACT-Alberta and its new mandate. All associations will be invited to continue to have a representative on the Steering Committee of FACT-Alberta.

Keeping Informed

As a practitioner impacted by these changes, it is imperative that you stay informed. If you belong to one of the practitioner associations with representation on ACTA (a member association of FACT-Alberta), you should receive regular updates through your association. However, we also recommend that you visit the FACT-Alberta website and social media, as well as the soon-to-be-launched ACTA website and social media, for updates.

Most urgently, if you qualify for the Expedited Route (which you will be informed of by your association in the coming months), you will need to be aware of when registration begins - so you may apply for membership to ACTA and become one of the first registrants of CCTA. Again, staying connected to your association and the FACT-Alberta/ACTA websites will provide you with this information as soon as it is available.

We hope that this information is helpful and answers many of the questions that are being posed at this time, even though there are still many details and timelines yet to be established.

The Directors of ACTA will continue to work diligently on your behalf, just as we have done under the banner of FACT-Alberta for the past four years. A smooth transition is in the best interest of both the public and practitioners and this will be our goal as we move forward together.

Submitted on behalf of the Directors of the Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (ACTA).

By,

Nicole Imgrund
Chair, FACT-Alberta
Chair, ACTA



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Contact Information:

Nicole Imgrund
Chair FACT-Alberta
Canadian Certified Counsellor

chair@acta-alberta.ca

Phone: 780.953.5649

Fax: 780.460.0032

www.fact-alberta.org



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