

What every ECE should know about the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators

Prepared by: AECEO, October 2007

1) The College of ECE. What is it?

It is not a....

- Training institution - it does not replace the community college programs
- Professional Association – it does not replace the voice of the AECEO
- Union – it does not negotiate employee/employer contract agreements
- Advocacy Group – it does not lobby or advocate but does set standards and policies for the profession to practice
- Government Ministry – Though the Minister will monitor to make sure the College is accountable and compliant to the act, he/she does not and should not be involved in the operations of the College of ECE.

It is the....

professional regulatory body for Early Childhood Educators. The ECE Act Schedule 8 was passed as part of the Bill 187 Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007 and received royal assent on May 17, 2007. This means it is a law and it would be mandatory for all who practice within the profession to register as a member as defined by the regulations and by-laws of the College. Like many other regulatory bodies, the primary goal of this College will be to protect the public interest.

2) Who will have to register?

Anybody who wishes to use the English or French titles or an abbreviation of any of these titles to describe themselves or their profession:

- Early Childhood Educator
- Registered Early Childhood Educator
- Éducatrice de la petite enfance
- Éducateur de la petite enfance
- Éducatrice de la petite enfance inscrit
- Éducateur de la petite enfance inscrit

This means you may state that you graduated from an ECE program, but you cannot call yourself an ECE or any of the above titles without being registered with the College of ECE. In this way, the public can expect a certain standard and accountability when they see any of the titles above beside a person's name or resume. The ECE Act also defines what constitutes practice of early childhood education as "the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs for children in order to promote the well-being and holistic development of children, and includes:

- 1) The delivery of programs to pre-school children and school aged children, including children with special needs;
- 2) The assessment of the programs and of the progress of children in the programs;
- 3) Communication with the parents or persons with legal custody of the children in the programs in order to improve the development of the children; and
- 4) Such other services or activities as may be prescribed by the regulations."

Though not stated above, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) has made it clear in public presentations that the scope of practice will include those dealing with infants and toddlers.

As it was passed as part of the Budget Act, we can be rest assured that MCYS wants the College of ECE to succeed in accomplishing its mandate. This means that we can expect changes in the Day Nurseries Act that will reflect the mandatory registration of Early Childhood Educators working in licensed settings and in programs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry (eg. Ontario Early Years Centres).

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Are there any exemptions to the mandatory registration?

3) Are there any exemptions to the mandatory registration?

The ECE Act does not require the following staff to register under the College of ECE:

- 1) Teachers and teachers assistants employed in the public school system
- 2) Early Childhood Assistants who work in a licensed setting with an ECE or an ECE with Director's Approval
- 3) ECEs with Director's Approval
- 4) Home Child Care Providers and Nannies (licensed or unregulated)
- 5) Private Home Day Care Visitors working for Home Child Care Agencies
- 6) Resource Teachers with Director's Approval who work in a licensed setting
- 7) School Age Recreation Programs employees as defined in Regulation 262 of DNA

However, this does not mean that any of the people above or any other individuals working in other related fields (e.g. Early Interventionists, Trainers, Consultants, etc) cannot decide to register with the College of ECE members if they have the ECE credentials (as will be determined by the appointed Transitional Council for initial registration and the Elected Council thereafter) that allows them to do so.

4) The ECE Act has now been passed, where is the College of ECE and who is running it?

The College of ECE does not currently have an office space or public face as it is still in the planning stages. This is the work of the Transitional Council.

The Transitional Council is composed of 9 members (2 Public representatives, 4 Early Childhood Educators and 3 with ECE Community College/University Faculty and Administrator background) and was appointed on August 2007 by the Minister of Children and Youth Services to serve for a period of 18 months. Members of this Council were appointed through the Public Appointments Secretariat Process (www.pas.gov.on.ca).

As per a letter from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the AECEO, dated October 24, 2007:

"Until February 2009, the Transitional Council will serve as the governing body of the College of Early Childhood Educators. Its work will be largely administrative and organizational and will be accountable to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

The Council is responsible for:

- Implementing a registration process for the transitional period including the hiring of a transitional registrar
- Implementing a process to develop Standards of Practice and a Code of Ethics for early childhood educators
- Consulting with First Nations practitioners and communities and develop a framework for the participation of First Nations early childhood educators in the profession and the college
- Drafting regulations and by-laws necessary for the elected and appointed council to undertake its responsibilities
- Conducting Elections of Council members prior to the end of the transitional period."

5) When and how do I register?

The registration process will still have to be established and determined by the Transitional Council. At the time of this printing, information was not yet available. The AECEO will continue to act as a source of information (through its website and publications) on this issue as they are made public. As the Transitional Council must hold elections by February 2009, we can expect that registration will begin sometime in 2008.

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6) What are the Elections of Council?

It is the primary goal of the Transitional Council to put into place by February 2009, an Elected Council that will have the responsibility of overseeing the College of ECEs. The Elected Council will be composed of 14 registered members of the College of ECE and 10 public appointments by the Lt. Governor in Council, as recommended by the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Besides the public appointments, only registered members will be allowed to vote and run for a position on the Elected Council. It is therefore important that once the registration process is open, as many eligible ECEs become members so that the majority of the profession has a say in the formation and direction of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

7) I don't currently hold a recognized ECE credential but have related work and educational experience. How do I become eligible to join the College?

To become a member of the College, you must meet the entry requirements set by the College of ECEs. What those requirements will be are yet to be determined by the Transitional Council. However, you can be assured that the minimum requirement will be an ECE diploma or comparable studies.

MCYS currently accepts the ECE diploma programs delivered by community colleges and the AECEO and AFÉSEO (www.afeseo.ca) letters of equivalency certificates as valid credentials to work as ECEs in Ontario.

In September 2007, in anticipation of the College, MCYS announced the availability of ECE training grants towards courses, training and travel allowance for individuals working in the licensed setting and seeking to upgrade to an ECE diploma. See more information on page 9 of this issue. Applicants completing ECE courses towards their AECEO or AFÉSEO letters of equivalency are also eligible for these grants.

MCYS also recently signed service agreements with AECEO and AFÉSEO to deliver the Equivalency Process. This means that in the coming months individuals with a Canadian or International post secondary education in a related field of study, can have their credentials assessed by AECEO or AFÉSEO towards gaining a Letter of Equivalency certificate at a reduced cost and in a more timely manner.

8) What are the fees going to be?

The College of ECEs must be self-sustaining. That means the College of ECE will be given a loan by the government to establish the College, however they will be obligated to pay it back within a reasonable time period. The College of ECE will require staff, office, equipment, financial and legal counsel, and other essentials to run the College of ECEs as a professional regulatory body. The main source of income for the College will be membership registration fees. The fee amount will therefore be determined by the number of members projected to register and the projected expenses with the objective of paying back the loan and making enough money to be self-sustaining. Based on these calculations, the initial registration fee will be set by the Transitional Council.

MCYS estimated that there are approximately 29,000 ECEs in the province of Ontario. How many of these 29,000 will be eligible and will register when the time comes will yet to be determined. Minister Chambers, former Minister of Children and Youth Services, announced at a press conference in July 2007 in Toronto that she was aware of the low wages and hardships high registration fees will bring to the profession. Therefore, MCYS was giving possible consideration to subsidizing initial registration fees to the College. The AECEO will continue to lobby MCYS for a firmer commitment of this subsidy in the coming months.

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Will I have to register for the College of ECE and the AECEO?

9) What will the College of ECE do for the Early Childhood Educator?

With the establishment of this College, Early Childhood Educators are now indisputably in a professional category. It means that Early Childhood Educators, in entering this field, are committed to practicing according to a set standard of professionalism and Code of Ethics. It means that the public will recognize and come to expect that someone carrying the title of Early Childhood Educator anywhere in Ontario will be accountable to those standards. The public will recognize that the title ensures the bearer has post secondary education and training that are specific to the field of early learning and care.

Higher regard for the profession can only translate to public recognition of the value of the profession and thus a means by which Early Childhood Educators can demand meaningful wages and working conditions from the public, their employer and the government.

10) Will I have to register for the College of ECE and the AECEO?

Other Ontario regulatory bodies differ in this. Some professions are set up with both the College and the professional association as one and the same, others are set up as completely separate entities, and there are others that make it mandatory for members to register for both to practice. This will have to be determined by the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The AECEO believes that for our field to have a strong professional body and to provide quality programs and services to children and families, we will need both the College of ECE and the AECEO to support the profession and to be two separate and distinct organizations. Just as the College of ECE's primary duty is to protect the interest of the public, so is the AECEO's primary duty to protect the interest of the profession. Both these goals complement each other and if supported, would create a balance that is healthy and mutually beneficial.

In anticipation of the College of ECE registration fee that an ECE will have to pay, the AECEO will be launching in January 2008 a reduced fee rate Electronic Membership Program (EMP) for professional members. More information is available on our website at www.aeceo.ca or in this issue of the ECE LINK on page 22 ♦