PERSPECTIVE

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Social Workers and Social Service Workers

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Message from the Registrar and CEO

As we move into the fall, it is a natural time to pause and reflect on the progress the College has made and where we are headed. This year marks the third year of our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan and is an opportunity to look back at what we have accomplished, while keeping our focus on the priorities that will shape the years ahead.

The College's four strategic priorities of Regulatory Excellence; Organizational Agility, Innovation and Effectiveness; Communication and Awareness; and Collaboration and Partnerships continue to guide our work. They are accompanied by our commitment to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. These commitments call on us to listen, build relationships and ensure that the perspectives and experiences of the communities we serve are reflected in how we approach regulation.

This past summer, the College Council was invited to travel to Thunder Bay and Treaty Three (Fort Frances), Ontario, and engage directly with local Indigenous communities. This historic visit offered a meaningful opportunity for Council members and staff to put our commitments into action. The purpose of the visit was simple and deliberate: to be present, to listen and to learn in a respectful and meaningful way. Council members had the privilege to spend time with local practitioners, community members and Indigenous

The College's four strategic priorities of Regulatory Excellence; Organizational Agility, Innovation and Effectiveness, Communication and Awareness, and Collaboration and Partnerships.

partners and to hear directly about their experiences and perspectives with social work, social service work and the systems that affect them. For the College, building stronger relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities means making space for these conversations and learning from the knowledge shared with us. This kind of engagement helps us better understand the realities of practice in different communities and consider how our regulatory approach can be more responsive to Indigenous Peoples and the communities they serve.

Our Equity and Inclusion Data Initiative, now with its third year completed, is another way we are putting our commitments into action. The information voluntarily shared by registrants is helping the College better understand the diversity of the professions we regulate and identify opportunities to strengthen our policies, programs, engagement and decision-making. Thank you to everyone who has participated and contributed to this work. We encourage you to explore the data insights from the third year of the initiative on our website.

Staying connected with registrants remains equally important. Coffee with the College continues to provide opportunities for registrants to connect directly with the College and discuss questions related to practice. Recordings from AMED 2026 are also available for registrants to revisit sessions and explore topics of interest. Coming up in November, we look forward to connecting with registrants through our upcoming Practice Notes: In Conversation event (previously known as the Educational Forum).

As we enter the third year of our Strategic Plan, I am reminded that progress is measured by what we set out to accomplish, and more importantly by how well we listen, adapt and respond along the way. The perspectives of registrants, communities and our partners continue to shape the College's direction and help us turn our commitments into meaningful action. There is still important work ahead, and I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together as we continue to strengthen regulation and serve the public across Ontario.

Sincerely,

Denitha Breau, RN, MSN, MBA
Registrar and CEO
Ontario College of Social Workers
and Social Service Workers

College Council and staff in Treaty Three (Fort Frances), Ontario

Respecting Choice:

Consent, Autonomy and the Older Adult

As Ontario's population ages, social workers and social service workers are increasingly supporting older adults. The decisions these clients make may be questioned by family members, caregivers or service providers. In these situations, practitioners may find themselves balancing concerns about safety with an older adult's dignity, preferences and right to make their own choices.

For Joy Friesen, RSW, that balance has been a consistent theme throughout her career. Joy has worked across a range of practice settings, including mental health, crisis support, public health and palliative care. These experiences have shaped how she approaches work with older adults. One lesson has remained clear: people do not stop being the author or expert of their lives simply because they become older, develop health concerns or need more support.

Keeping the older adult client at the centre

Joy recognizes that concerns about an older adult's well-being often come from a genuine place of care. A family member may be worried about falls. A provider may be concerned when someone refuses treatment. A care team may believe that moving someone to a more supportive environment is the safest option. Good intentions can sometimes lead to decisions being made for the person rather than with them. "Concern can easily become like control unknowingly," Joy says.

For practitioners, this means taking time to understand the older adult's perspective. What do they want? What do they understand about the situation? What matters most to them? Are we responding to an actual risk, or to our own discomfort with their decision?

Joy also emphasizes that safety cannot be the only measure of good care. Quality of life can include relationships, privacy, culture, purpose, independence and belonging. An older adult may place greater value on remaining at home, maintaining a familiar routine or spending time with people they care about, even when those choices involve some risk.

A meaningful approach starts with empathy and curiosity. Rather than immediately deciding that a choice is unwise, social workers and social service workers can take the time to understand why it matters to the person.

Looking beyond the word "no"

Respecting autonomy can begin with something as simple as listening. Joy recalls being in meetings where professionals, family members and caregivers discuss

what an older adult needs while the person is sitting in the room. She encourages practitioners to pause those conversations and make sure the older adult is heard first. "The first person to be asked should be the older adult themselves," says Joy.

Supporting autonomy does not mean expecting someone to make decisions without support. An older adult may need information presented in plain language, an interpreter, hearing support, written information or simply more time to process what is being discussed.

Joy also makes an important distinction between **independence and autonomy**. A person may rely on others for transportation, meals, bathing or medication while still making decisions about how those supports are provided. The focus should be on what the person can still direct and what supports can make those choices possible.

The same approach applies when an older adult says no. Refusing home care, treatment or another service should not automatically be labelled as resistance or non-compliance. There may be fear, discomfort, a lack of trust or a misunderstanding about what is being offered.

"Respecting our autonomy begins with being able to hear 'no' without immediately trying to turn it into a yes," says Joy. Empathy means taking the time to understand what is behind the decision and what the person needs to feel heard, understood and respected.

Balancing safety and dignity

Joy does not see safety and autonomy as competing values. Instead, she encourages practitioners to ask: How can we reduce serious harm while preserving as much choice as possible?

Practitioners can start by being specific about the risk. What exactly might happen? How likely is it? How serious could the consequences be? Does the person understand the potential consequences?

If an older adult understands a risk and chooses to accept it, Joy encourages social workers and social service workers to consider how they can support that decision while making the risk more manageable. She refers to this as the "dignity of risk," recognizing that adults of all ages make choices that involve some degree of risk.

Reflection is also important. Practitioners may genuinely want to protect someone, but care can unintentionally become control. Asking whether a response is based on the person's experience or our own anxiety can create space for a more respectful approach.

Understanding the person behind the choice

Family involvement can add another layer of complexity. Joy draws on her Filipino background, where there can be a strong sense of responsibility toward parents and elders. Families may be deeply involved in caring for an older relative because of love, respect and a strong sense of family obligation. That care should be respected, but it should not replace the older adult's voice. "Culture should make us curious, not presumptive," states Joy.

Social workers and social service workers can recognize the importance of family and culture while still asking the individual what they want. The same principle applies to assumptions about aging, disability or quality of life. Living alone does not necessarily mean someone is lonely. Needing assistance does not mean someone is incapable. Dementia does not mean a person no longer has meaningful preferences.

Professional expertise provides knowledge, but it does not give practitioners ownership over another person's life. The older adult remains a person first, not a diagnosis, a risk or a collection of needs to be managed.

Building trust through respect

For older adults who have experienced being dismissed, spoken for or excluded from decisions, trust may take time.

Joy describes trust as being built through "small, repeated experiences of respect." Introduce yourself. Explain your role. Speak directly to the person. Ask permission before discussing sensitive information. Be transparent about confidentiality and its limits. Follow through on what you say you will do. Most importantly, make room for disagreement.

An older adult does not have to agree with a social worker or social service worker for the relationship to remain respectful. Listening to their concerns and understanding why they disagree can demonstrate that their voice continues to matter.

For Joy, the question practitioners can return to is simple: What matters most to you, and how can we help you preserve that? Asking a question like this can be a useful way to bring consent, autonomy, safety and dignity into the same conversation and reinforces the importance of seeing the older adult as the expert in their own life.

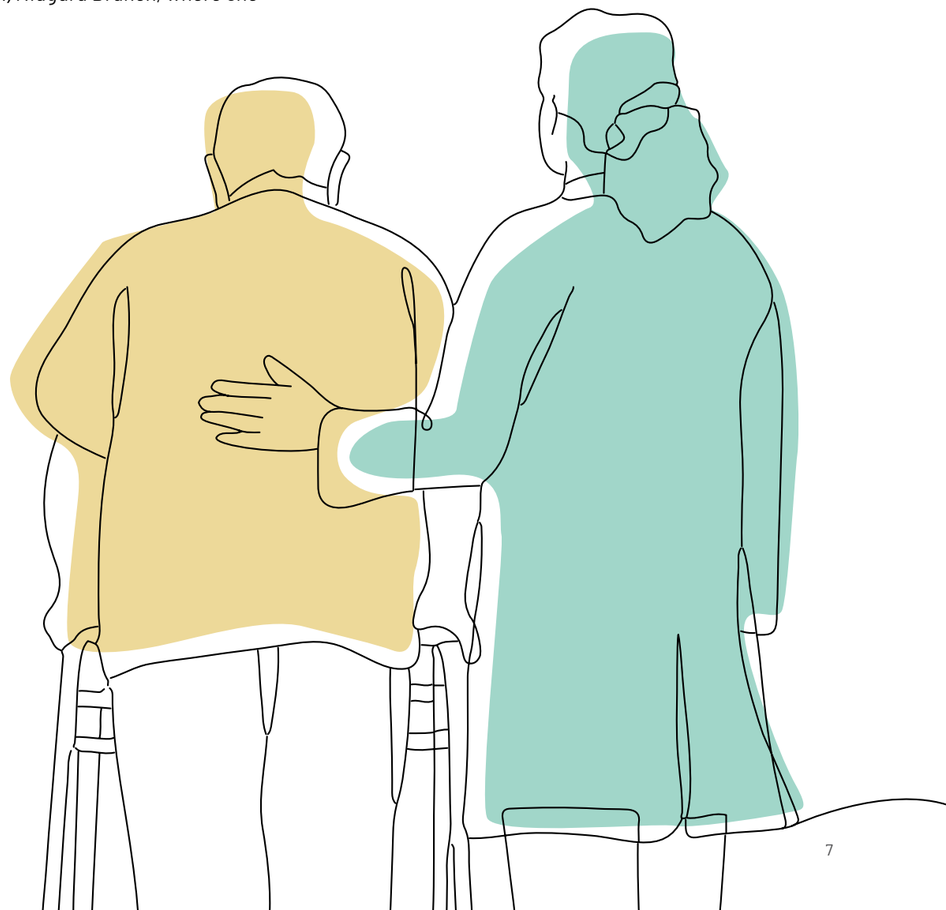
Ultimately, respecting autonomy is not about stepping back from professional responsibility or ignoring legitimate concerns about safety. It is about using that responsibility to understand the person, recognize what matters to them and find ways to support their choices wherever possible. Empathy and respect are a part of good practice and also how to create the conditions for meaningful consent, to preserve dignity and support older adults to remain active participants in their own lives. When we take the time to listen, question our assumptions and understand the person behind the decision, we can move from simply managing risk to supporting care that is safe, person-centred and grounded in the choices of the individual.

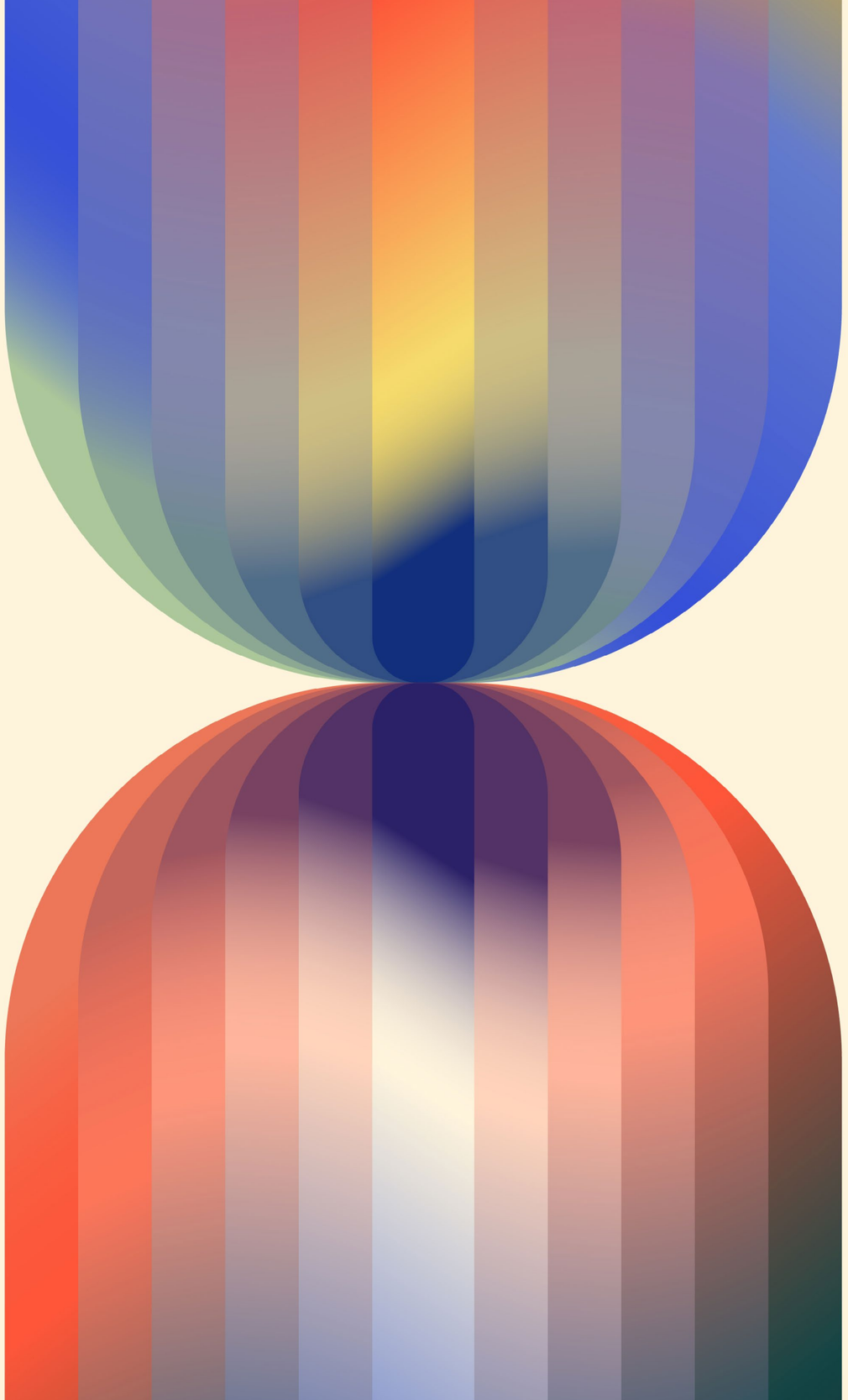
Joy Friesen, MEd, MSW, RSW, is a bilingual social worker, advocate, and PhD candidate in the School of Social Work at the University of Windsor. She currently serves as Director of Clinical Operations at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Niagara Branch, where she brings a strong commitment to compassionate, trauma-informed, person-centred care and clinical leadership.

Previously serving as Director of Community Programs at Hospice Niagara, Joy brings extensive leadership and professional experience across mental health, crisis intervention, community justice, forensic settings, public health, and palliative care. Her work is grounded in equity, social justice, and a deep commitment to improving access to meaningful, high-quality care.

A passionate advocate for consent, autonomy and dignity, Joy is dedicated to elevating the voices and rights of equity-deserving populations. Her leadership reflects the values that first inspired her career in mental health: compassion, connection and the belief that everyone deserves to be heard, respected and supported.

The College thanks Joy for speaking with us and sharing her experiences. In appreciation, the College has made a donation to Hospice Niagara.





Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy:

Putting Practice into Focus

Psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy (PAP) is a therapeutic approach that has growing interest surrounding it. Social workers and social service workers may increasingly encounter questions about providing services in this emerging area of practice.

Registrants may participate in PAP in certain circumstances by providing psychosocial and psychotherapeutic services; however, they must not prescribe, possess, administer or use psychedelic substances as part of this treatment. It is important that registrants fully understand the legal requirements and their professional limitations when considering or participating in treatment modalities. Registrants are encouraged to obtain advice from a lawyer to understand their legal obligations.

The psychedelic drugs most frequently being used in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy are psilocybin and methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA). Psilocybin and MDMA are both classified as restricted drugs. Psychedelic substances are subject to the Food and Drugs Act (FDA) and its regulations and are also controlled substances under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA). The prescribing, possession, administration and use of these substances for therapeutic purposes are restricted and subject to federal regulation and require authorization under applicable Health Canada pathways, including the Special Access Program (SAP) and exemptions under the CDSA.[1] Only physicians and nurse practitioners with prescribing authority may apply for exemptions and file a request to the SAP for the use of PAP.[2] Of note, the SAP is for access to emergency treatments only where conventional treatments have failed, are unsuitable or unavailable to treat individuals suffering from serious or life-threatening conditions.

Registrants must only participate in PAP models that meet all the legal criteria and occur within an authorized treatment framework. The *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA) defines the governing framework for Ontario's regulated health professionals and outlines the 14 controlled acts that pose significant risks of harm to the public. To protect the public, the RHPA restricts their performance to certain legally authorized regulated professionals. With these considerations in mind, it is critical that College registrants understand that the only controlled act that registrants of the College are authorized to perform is psychotherapy. Since registrants can perform the controlled act of psychotherapy (provided they possess the requisite competencies), they may provide psychosocial services as part of lawfully authorized PAP models, including preparation, integration and follow-up support, in accordance with the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and applicable legislation.

Key Practice Considerations

Registrants supporting PAP must ensure they are competent to provide services that comply with the Standards of Practice and applicable legal and legislative requirements. They should complete specialized training and engage in ongoing supervision with a PAP experienced supervisor. They must maintain clear, accurate and complete documentation that demonstrates informed consent and supports the services provided. Due to the heightened vulnerability of supporting PAP clients, it is crucial that registrants seek legal advice to discuss the risks associated with providing this service and confirm coverage with their professional liability insurance provider.

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[1] Health Canada, "Notice to stakeholders: Requests to the Special Access Program (SAP) involving psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy," Government of Canada, February 27, 2023, online: https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/announcements/requests-special-access-program-psychedelic-assisted-psychotherapy.html.

[2] Health Canada, "Requests under the Special Access Program for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy," Government of Canada, online: https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/announcements/requests-special-access-program-psychedelic-assisted-psychotherapy.html

Registrants practising PAP must consider all Standards of Practice requirements in conjunction with their professional judgment, including the following:

- Principle I: Relationship with Clients, interpretation 1.5
- Principle II: Competence and Integrity, interpretations 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.6, 2.1.7 and 2.2.12
- Principle III: Responsibility to Clients, interpretations 3.3, 3.8 and 3.9
- Principle IV: The Social Work and Social Service Work Record, introductory paragraph and interpretations 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, and 4.1.5

Registrants should also be aware that, among other provisions, the College's *Professional Misconduct Regulation* considers it professional misconduct to practise in a manner that would reasonably be regarded as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional and/or to contravene any federal, provincial or territorial law related to public health or relevant to the registrant's suitability to practise. This would include contravening the requirements of the FDA, CDSA, RHPA, or other legislation and regulations relevant to PAP.

Continued Learning

PAP is a complex and evolving area of practice. Registrants who provide psychotherapy or related psychosocial services as part of a PAP treatment model should continuously assess their competence, remain current with their knowledge and seek supervision and legal advice when needed. The following College resources are also available and provide helpful guidance to review:

- Practice Notes: The Importance of Professional Judgment
- ETHICS→A: Ethical Decision-Making Tool
- Practice Notes: ETHICS→A: Ethical Decision-Making Tool
- Webinar: Supervision: The Cornerstone of Competence
- Practice Notes: Supervision At the Core of Competent and Ethical Practice

Registrants with inquiries on this topic can consult with the College's Professional Practice team at practice@ocswssw.org or by booking a consult.

What to Know About the College's Discipline Process

One of the key responsibilities of the College is to address concerns about the professional conduct of registrants. This work happens through our complaints and discipline processes. There are several ways that an issue can be brought forward to the College: through a complaint or through a report. A small percentage of complaints and reports move into the discipline process.

Although most registrants never face discipline hearings during their careers, the process can feel very daunting if it does arise. We hope the below information will alleviate some concerns that registrants have about the discipline process.

How will I find out if a complaint or report filed against me has been referred to a discipline hearing?

If a complaint or report is referred to a discipline hearing, the registrant will be served a Notice of Hearing. The Notice of Hearing outlines the College's allegations against the registrant.

A registrant is only referred to a discipline hearing after an investigation into allegations brought forward has been completed. Since registrants are informed if a complaint or report is filed against them and have the opportunity to respond to the allegations, they will know that it is possible that their case will be referred to a discipline hearing. The Notice of Hearing will not be the first time they hear of allegations made against them.

It's important to remember that only a very small percentage of complaints and reports are ever referred to the Discipline Committee. Examples of cases that are referred to the Discipline Committee include sexual abuse, fraud and serious confidentiality breaches.

What is the Discipline Committee?

The Discipline Committee is the committee responsible for hearing and determining allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence. The committee is composed of experienced social workers and social service workers as well as members of the public.

If I'm referred to a discipline hearing, will my registration be revoked?

Not necessarily. Revocation of registration is only one outcome of a discipline hearing and is reserved for the most serious cases, such as those involving sexual misconduct. Other outcomes include:

- A reprimand;
- Restrictions on the registrant's registration, called "terms, conditions or limitations" (for example, requiring a registrant to be supervised for a period of time);
- Imposing a fine; or
- Suspending the certificate of registration for a period of time.

Can I still practise if I've been referred to a discipline hearing?

In many cases, yes. However, with especially serious allegations such as those of sexual abuse, the College

may impose an interim suspension until the hearing has concluded.

Will the public be informed if I've been referred to a discipline hearing?

Yes. The Notice of Hearing will be publicly posted on the registrant's Online Register profile.

Once the matter has concluded, the Discipline Committee's decision will also be posted on the registrant's Online Register profile and shared in the registrant newsletter *Perspective*. Decisions are also posted on the Canadian Legal Information Institute.

Are discipline hearings open to the public?

Generally, discipline hearings are open to the public. However, the Discipline Committee can order that the hearing be closed if the safety of someone may be jeopardized, matters of public or financial security may be disclosed or someone involved in a court proceeding may not be able to remain impartial if they watch the hearing.

If I'm referred to a discipline hearing, will the hearing date be scheduled immediately?

No. There are several steps that must take place before a hearing date is scheduled.

As a first step, legal counsel for the College will reach out to the registrant to see if they can come to an agreed statement of facts. If they can come to an agreement, then the hearing is referred to as uncontested. If they cannot come to an agreement, the hearing is referred to as contested.

There may also be pre-hearing conferences scheduled. Additionally, there will be time allotted for the registrant and the College to share any documents they plan on bringing forward as evidence with each other.

Should I hire a lawyer if I've been referred to a discipline hearing?

The College strongly recommends that registrants retain the services of a lawyer if they are referred to a discipline hearing, however, it is not required. For those who choose not to use the services of a lawyer, the College has created a guide for self-represented registrants to help them navigate the process.

How long does a discipline hearing last for?

Uncontested hearings, where a registrant and the College come to an agreed statement of facts, usually take place over the course of one day.

Contested hearings, where there is no agreement between the College and registrant reached, can take a number of days to finish.

What should I do if I have additional questions?

As a first step, check out the discipline information on our website. If your question isn't addressed on the webpage, contact the Professional Conduct Department at investigations@ocswssw.org.

Additional Info on Complaints

The complaints process comes before the discipline process. Check out the below resources for more information.

- Curious about complaints? We've got answers
- Complaints information – what registrants need to know
- Video resource: The Lifecycle of a Complaint – In Conversation with the Professional Conduct Department

Registration Fees:

Your Questions Answered

As annual renewal season approaches, many registrants have questions about the renewal process and what is required to maintain their registration. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions to help guide you through the renewal period.

When should I renew my registration?

We recommend that you plan ahead and renew as early as possible during the renewal season, which opens in early November. As the December 31 renewal deadline approaches, increased inquiry volumes and holiday office closures may delay assistance. Renewing early gives you time to resolve any questions or technical issues before the deadline.

Do I need to renew if I am not currently practising?

Yes. All registrants in good standing must renew their certificate of registration every year, on or before December 31. This includes registrants in the general, inactive and retired classes.

Why do I pay an annual registration fee?

Social work and social service work are regulated professions in Ontario. Registrants pay an annual fee to the College to remain registered and to support the College's work as the provincial regulator. Registration fees enable the College to fulfill its mandate to protect the public by regulating the practice of both professions. All costs associated with regulating the professions must be covered entirely through registrant fees. The College receives no additional or government funding.

What do registration fees support?

Fees support the College's regulatory responsibilities, including:

- Registering qualified social workers and social service workers;
- Establishing and maintaining standards of practice;
- Maintaining the public Online Register;
- Administering the Continuing Competence Program;
- Providing professional practice resources and consultations; and
- Addressing complaints, reports and discipline matters.

What are the registration fees for 2027?

There will be no increase to registration and renewal fees for 2027. The annual fees are:

- General class: $400
- Electronic practice: $100
- Inactive class: $200
- Retired class: $50

What if I plan on retiring in 2027?

If you intend to move to the retired class for 2027, submit your status-change request through the Online Portal before December 31. If the College is not notified by the deadline, you may be required to renew and pay the fee for your current class of registration.

For more information, visit the College's Annual Renewals webpage or contact the Registration and Renewals Department at info@ocswssw.org.

Council Roster

2026-2027

Tarak Ahmed
Elected Social Worker

Tarak Ahmed is a registered social worker and psychotherapist with more than 15 years of experience in hospital outpatient mental health, community mental health, post-secondary counselling and the provincial public service. He holds a Master of Social Work and a Master of Business Administration. As a Clinical Manager at Grandview Kids, Tarak leads an interprofessional team supporting children, youth and families in Durham Region. He also maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Ajax and teaches part-time at Ontario colleges. Tarak brings clinical and leadership perspectives to Council, along with a commitment to public protection, professional accountability and equitable access to services. He lives in Ajax with his family and enjoys swimming and fishing.

Nicole Bonnie
Public Member

Nicole Bonnie is a renowned organizational consultant with a Master of Social Work from Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) and is pursuing a Doctorate in Education and Leadership from Western University. Alongside her doctoral studies, Nicole's consulting brand specializes in organizational excellence and transformative change within the public sector. With a distinguished career, Nicole has held senior leadership positions within child welfare, including her historic appointment as the first Black CEO of the Ontario Children's Aid Societies in 2019, marking a pivotal moment in the province's child welfare sector. Her commitment to effecting positive change is evident in her advocacy for prevention strategies through addressing service disparities affecting marginalized identities. Nicole is dedicated to equity integration across various facets of public sector work, including leadership, the mental health sector, education, governance, service excellence and research/data. An advocate for marginalized communities, Nicole consistently works to center their voices in all her endeavors. Her significant contributions have had an extraordinary impact on the lives of children, youth and families within systems across Canada, making her a force for positive transformation. Nicole was elected as Council Chair for the 2026-2028 term.

Carina Chan
Public Member

Carina Chan is a Partner and Family Law Lawyer at Burrison Hudani Doris LLP. Carina graduated from the University of Toronto with dual Juris Doctor and Master of Social Work degrees. In addition to her family law practice, Carina also represents children in court proceedings through the Office of the Children's Lawyer and provides family mediation and parenting coordination services. Carina is currently the Chair of the Ontario Bar Association's Child and Youth Law section executive. She also previously served on the MCCSS Ontario Youth Justice Task Force and was a Board Member for the Red Door Family Shelter. Carina has held various advisory roles for stakeholders in the child welfare system and assisted with the development of tuition-free post-secondary education opportunities and privacy legislation for young people from care.

Chisanga Chekwe
Public Member

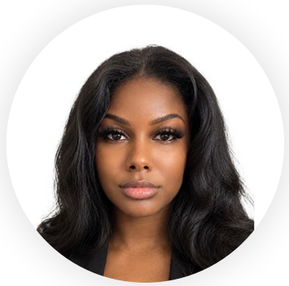
Chisanga Chekwe brings a wealth of governance, development, business and legal expertise to College Council. Chisanga has served as Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Women's Issues, Seniors' Affairs, and International Trade in Ontario; Chair and CEO of the Social Benefits Tribunal; Executive Director at Oxfam; and adjudication officer and United Nations observer support officer monitoring elections in South Africa; Supervisor of the post-war election in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also spent six years with the Ontario Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, serving as a board member and Chair of the Board. Chisanga studied law at the University of Birmingham in England, before he received a Master of Laws degree from the University of London. He then studied philosophy, politics and economics at the University of Oxford, resulting in BA and MA degrees.

Denyse Clara
Elected Social Service Worker

Denyse Clara brings more than a decade of experience in community and social services, along with a strong commitment to upholding the integrity of the social service work profession and protecting the public. She values the role of regulation in maintaining public trust, professional accountability and high standards of practice. Denyse is particularly interested in how the experiences and perspectives of social service workers, service users and communities can inform thoughtful policy development and meaningful systemic change. Through her role on Council, she looks forward to listening, learning and building collaborative approaches that strengthen the profession while ensuring diverse experiences and perspectives are reflected in the development of policies and practices.

Geneviève Côté
Elected Social Worker

Geneviève Côté holds a BAH with a major in Psychology from Queen's University (1996) and received her master's of social work degree from the University of Ottawa (1998). She is also a graduate of the LL.M. in health law from Osgoode Hall, York University (2024). Geneviève has worked in community (London, UK) and hospital (Ottawa, ON) health care for nearly 30 years. She has taught at Collège La Cité, Dalhousie, Carleton and the University of Ottawa. She enjoyed over 20 years at The Ottawa Hospital in psychosocial oncology, professional practice, patient relations, patient engagement and clinical risk management. Currently, she is the Director of Patient Care Services for the Integrated Schizophrenia and Recovery Program of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre. She is thrilled to represent her region for her third and final term after serving on the College Council from 2004-2010.



Yatisha Donalds
Elected Social Service Worker

Yatisha Donalds has a background in child and youth work, social services and community-based practice. She holds an Honours Bachelor's degree in Children, Childhood & Youth Studies from York University and a diploma in Social Service Work from Seneca Polytechnic. Her experience includes community-based services, youth mentorship, advocacy and supporting individuals navigating complex social and systemic challenges. Yatisha's practice is client-centred, trauma-informed, strengths-based and culturally responsive. She is passionate about advancing equity, accessibility, inclusion and culturally responsive practice within the social service sector. Yatisha brings a thoughtful, community-informed and equity-focused perspective to Council. She is committed to strengthening public protection and professional excellence through accountability, integrity, continuous learning and attention to the systemic barriers affecting the people and communities that practitioners serve.

John Fleming
Public Member

John has served in the management ranks of local and provincial governments as well as not-for-profits, achieving senior leadership positions in several organizations, including service as a municipal CAO, Deputy Minister in Ontario and as CEO of a national health charity. After completing his full-time career, he continued his leadership work by achieving the Chartered Director designation and opening his 'occasional' consulting practice. Until winding up that practice, John focused his work on governance teaching and advice, executive mentoring and coaching and group facilitation, especially emphasizing his ability to help boards and teams work effectively to identify and achieve common goals. John has completed a 12-year term as the Integrity Commissioner for the Town of Caledon and is a Past Chair of the Board of Governors of Sheridan College; a past Chair of the Board of Directors of Halton Healthcare Services and of Ovarian Cancer Canada. He is also a past Director of OMERS Sponsors Corporation and Vice Chair of the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Board of Directors. John served two terms as Council Chair for the College and currently sits on a number of statutory and non-statutory committees, including the Executive Committee.

Sanjay Govindaraj
Elected Social Worker

Sanjay Govindaraj holds a Master of Social Work and a Master's in Applied Environmental Studies. With over 30 years of experience across the not-for-profit, private and public sectors, he has led initiatives addressing poverty, food security, housing, child trafficking, intimate partner violence, Indigenous reconciliation, accessibility, equity and organizational change. He is currently the Director of Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion (READI) at the City of Waterloo, where he leads the City's READI work, including the development of a multi-year plan and initiatives focused on Reconciliation, community engagement, accessibility, anti-racism, staff learning and reducing barriers to municipal services. In addition to his full-time role, Sanjay is a registered social worker who provides part-time counselling services at Aligned Health in Waterloo, with a focus on supporting equity-denied groups. He is recognized as an Associate Practicum Professor by Wilfrid Laurier University for his commitment to supervising MSW students. Sanjay has also served on various not-for-profit boards and actively mentors new immigrants and refugees. First elected to Council in 2018, Sanjay served two terms as Council Chair. He continues to hold various positions on College committees, including the Executive Committee.

Bianca Lenarduzzi
Elected Social Service Worker

Bianca Lenarduzzi, RSSW, specializes in gerontology and is currently completing her third year of the bachelor of social work program part-time at the University of Windsor. She has been actively involved in student leadership throughout her studies, serving with the Canadian Federation of Students and the Organization of Part-time University Students (OPUS), where she was recently appointed as the Students with Disabilities Constituency Commissioner as an OPUS representative. She has also served as a student representative on several faculty subcommittees and with the Association of Social Work Students. Guided by Martin Luther King Jr.'s belief that "Greatness is determined by service," Bianca is committed to using her skills and experiences to serve the profession.

Janice McGurran
Public Member

Janice McGurran brings senior-level experience across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, with a strong background in overseeing all aspects of Human Resources. Her career includes impactful work with diverse social work specialties at organizations such as CNIB and Kids Help Phone. She has pursued education through the University of Toronto, York University and Queen's University, completing coursework in Industrial Relations, Psychology, Business, Leadership, teaching (including adult education), Indigenous culture and legal frameworks. Janice also brings extensive Board and Committee experience, including involvement with hospital boards, Trillium, Citizen's Council, a women's shelter and the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee. She has recently been appointed to AGOP (Advisory Group on Older Persons) in conjunction with the International Centre for Longevity and the Canadian Coalition Against Ageism. She remains committed to continuous learning and staying current on legislative and common law developments.

Lori Monroe
Elected Social Service Worker

Lori Monroe is a registered social service worker and brings over 22 years of experience in mental health, rehabilitation and developmental services. Lori has provided therapy and transitional support for individuals recovering from brain injuries, trauma and developmental disabilities, with a focus on maximizing independence and reducing challenging behaviors. Lori develops tailored treatment plans that incorporate psychodynamic psychotherapy, trauma-informed care, anti-oppressive practice and harm reduction. She empowers clients to achieve their highest level by addressing their social, emotional, intellectual and psychological needs. Lori integrates inclusive language and gender-affirming practices into her work, fostering an environment of respect and trust. Lori is committed to cultivating strong relationships with clients and professionals, providing holistic, client-centered therapy. Outside of her professional life, Lori is an outdoor enthusiast, animal lover, avid reader and engaged in environmental and social justice issues.

Suzanne Oliver
Elected Social Service Worker

Suzanne Oliver has over 30 years of experience in social services and community outreach including 20 years specifically in child protection, currently based in Stirling, Ontario. She holds a two-year diploma in social service work from Loyalist College. As the Wraparound Support at Loyalist College, Suzanne recruits and develops internship opportunities for participants while ensuring barriers are removed. As a Professor, Suzanne teaches various subjects, fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. Suzanne's extensive experience in child protection includes her roles as a Family Support Worker at Hastings Children's Aid Society and as an Intake Screener. She has been instrumental in implementing in-home support for families, assessing needs and promoting positive change for children and their caregivers. Suzanne emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development. She remains an active advocate for community resources and a supporter of student well-being. She is dedicated to promoting programs that facilitate positive change in her community, whether through outreach initiatives or individualized support. Her longstanding commitment to education and community service showcases her deep understanding of social service dynamics and her passion for empowering others.

Mandi Olson
Elected Social Service Worker

Mandi Olson is a registered social service worker based in northwestern Ontario. With more than 15 years of experience in the social work field, she is committed to advancing grassroots and systems-level change grounded in Indigenous best practices. She has experience with both not-for-profit and private-sector wellness services and organizations. Mandi is the co-owner of Binesiwag Center for Wellness, a successful business that provides a broad range of wellness services across the lifespan. Its areas of focus include mental health, addictions, direct support for 2SLGBTQIAP+ people, women and girls and capacity building. Outside of her professional work, Mandi enjoys spending time on the land and with her family. Her interests include hunting, fishing, camping and travelling.

Marinna Read
Elected Social Worker

Marinna Read is a Fort William First Nation community member and resides in Thunder Bay. She holds a bachelor's degree in criminology from the University of Manitoba and an honours bachelor of social work and master of social work degrees from Lakehead University. She has spent over 20 years practising in youth and adult mental health, Indigenous child welfare, program and community development and most recently implementing Indigenous health care in a hospital setting. She has committed her professional career to assisting those on their wellness journey in a respectful and kind way ensuring culturally safe care through an Indigenous lens. Her personal life includes plenty of family time and enjoying the great outdoors in beautiful northwestern Ontario. Marinna empowers individuals to use their inner strengths and culture to move forward and celebrate themselves while creating change in their lives.

Candice Snake
Elected Social Worker

Candice Snake's home community is Munsee-Delaware Nation. Her education started with her ancestors Rosie Deleary, her grandmother Stella Mae Burch, her mother Irene Snake, as well as her father Larry Burch. Their influence shapes the work that she does in realizing the need for critical reflection in educating service providers and helping families care for children. They ignite the fire in her to continue this vital decolonizing work to ensure Indigenous families are empowered as caregivers. Candice received her MSW from Laurier University in 2020. Her multi-disciplinary work experience over the past 26 years provided a skill set for leadership, policy development, best practice and accountability. She worked with a team to develop HEART & SPIRIT training, a program which is utilized in Ontario child wellbeing agencies to train foster parents and is currently experiencing interest nationally and internationally.

Elayne Tanner
Elected Social Worker

Dr. Elayne Tanner is a registered social worker with more than 30 years of professional experience. She holds BA and BSW degrees from York University, as well as an MSW, Graduate Diploma in Social Administration and PhD degrees from Wilfrid Laurier University. Certified in EMDR and Hypnosis and trained as a Family Mediator, she has published on anti-oppressive practice, global mental health, social work ethics and hypnosis. Elayne serves as a reviewer for Canadian and American professional journals and as a sessional graduate professor at the University of Windsor.
In private practice, she provides counselling and psychotherapy in areas including childhood trauma, sexual abuse, relationships, parenting and divorce. She has also contributed to the community through her work with the Court-based Mandatory Information Program, consultation for the John Howard Society and many volunteer services recognized by the 2008 United Way of Milton Volunteer of the Year Award. Elayne is currently serving her second term on Council, where she has participated in several statutory and non-statutory committees.

Izabella Tinc
Elected Social Service Worker

Izabella is a registered social service worker with certification in thanatology and more than a decade of experience in mental health, elder support and youth development. Her professional journey reflects a deep commitment to ethical practice, integrity and the advancement of evidence-based social services across Ontario. With a foundation in trauma-informed and person-centered care, Izabella has worked extensively in hospice, healthcare and community settings, guiding individuals and families through grief, loss and life transitions. Her work emphasizes dignity, emotional safety, and empowerment through every stage of care. Izabella has also dedicated much of her career to supporting youth facing behavioral challenges, addiction and neurodiversity, helping them develop resilience, emotional regulation and self-awareness. As a foster parent, she brings a unique and compassionate understanding of the complex emotional needs of young people and families. In addition to her professional practice, Izabella has devoted over two decades to charitable and community initiatives, receiving multiple awards for her advocacy and service to vulnerable populations. Her leadership continues to reflect her belief in compassion, accountability and social justice as the foundation of effective social work practice.

Nicole Withers
Elected Social Worker

Nicole Withers is a social worker with a Bachelor of Social Work from Memorial University of Newfoundland and a Master of Social Work from McGill University, with a focus on children, youth and families. She currently works as a Hematology and Oncology Social Worker at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), where she provides clinical counselling, psychosocial support and advocacy. Nicole also contributes to program development and initiatives that strengthen psychosocial screening, assessment and response within pediatric health care. Her experience spans child welfare, child and youth advocacy, mental health, community social work and private practice. She has also held leadership and advocacy roles at the community and national levels.

Alex Yuan
Public Member

Alex Yuan founded a successful medical software development company in 1982. He has served on numerous non-profit boards, including as Vice-Chair of the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care in 1995 and as the founder of the S'port for Kids charitable foundation in 1997. He has also been appointed to key positions such as the Ontario Job and Investment Board and the Ontario Medical Association's Ontario Medical Student Bursary Fund Committee. In addition, he served as a Team Richmond Hill Business Ambassador and as Board Chair of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority.
Alex has received several honours and awards, including the Outstanding Business Achievement Award from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the ACCE, recognition from the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond and Platinum Jubilee Awards, the King Charles III Coronation Medal, the Toronto Police Services John Herra Award and the Knight of the Order of St. George, among others. He currently serves as a member of the Toronto Police Services Chinese Community Consultative Committee.

Council Meeting Highlights

June 10, 2026

- Sanjay Govindaraj, Council Chair, provided his report to Council.
- Denitha Breau, RN, MSN, MBA, Registrar and CEO, presented her report to Council. The report provided updates under each strategic priority in the College's Strategic Plan and included information about the following: the College's Continuing Competence Program and compliance rates; updates around the College's renewal period; insights from the Professional Conduct department with respect to reports and complaints; the College's Equity and Inclusion Data Initiative year two findings and ongoing discussions with the government on legislative amendments including Bill 119.
- Council reviewed the Statement of Financial Position as of April 30, 2026.
- Council reviewed the Statement of Operations from January 1, 2026 to April 30, 2026.
- Council reviewed the College's 2025-2026 Risk Register and discussed considerations for new classifications of risk categories.
- Council received background and governance context to support consideration of a regular governance review cycle.
- Council discussed updates from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair on progress in implementing an EDI framework to establish a baseline for the College.
- Council was provided with updates and discussed the College's implementation of entry-to-practice exams for College applicants.
- Council approved the appointment of external auditors for the 2026 fiscal year.
- Council approved the College to undertake a Request for Proposals process for the selection of external auditors for the 2027 fiscal year.
- Council approved the Finance and Audit Committee's recommendation that registration and renewal fees will not increase in 2027. This decision is based on cash flow projections.
- Reports were received from the following statutory committees: Executive; Complaints; Discipline; Fitness to Practise; and Registration Appeals.
- Reports were received from the following non-statutory committees: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Standards of Practice; Election; Nominating; Finance and Audit; and Governance.

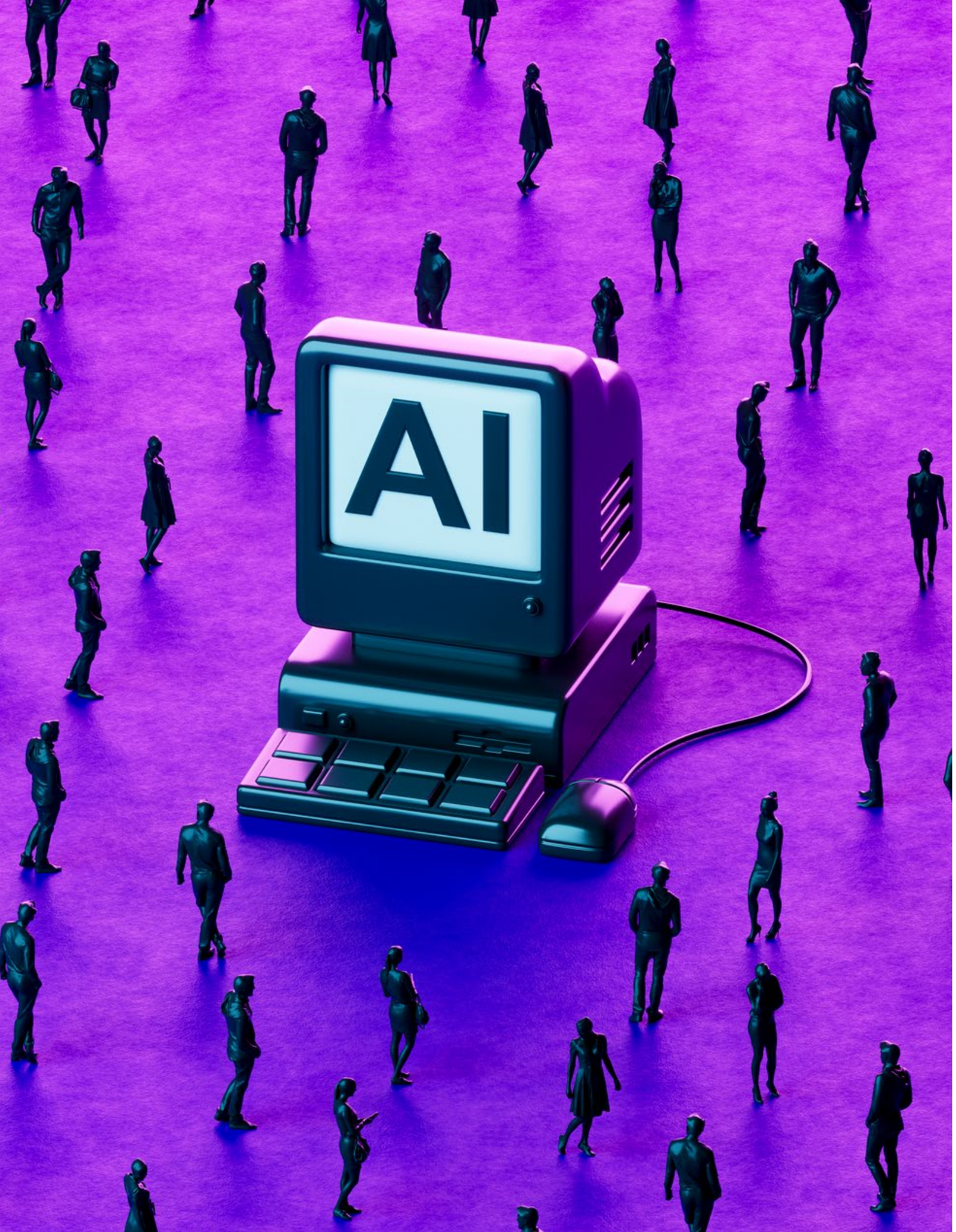
September 9 and 10, 2026

September 9

- The following Council members were elected by Council to the Executive Committee for 2026-2028:
- Nicole Bonnie, Public Member – Council Chair
- Mandi Olson, RSSW – Vice-Chair
- John Fleming, Public Member – Executive Member
- Sanjay Govindaraj, RSW – Executive Member
- Marinna Read, RSW – Executive Member
- Izabella Tinc, RSSW – Executive Member

September 10

- Council members Mandi Olson and Marinna Read provided an overview on Council's June trip to Thunder Bay and Fort Frances.
- Sanjay Govindaraj, RSW, provided his outgoing report as Council Chair to Council.
- Denitha Breau, RN, MSN, MBA, Registrar and CEO, presented her report to Council. The report provided updates under each priority in the College's Strategic Plan and included information about the following: ongoing outreach and Professional Practice engagement; updates around entry-to-practice exams; registrant-base data insights and registration activity; professional conduct highlights; and ongoing communication and partnership engagement.
- Council received an update on the College's Risk Register.
- Council reviewed the Statement of Financial Position as of July 31, 2026.
- Council reviewed the Statement of Operations from January 1, 2026 to July 31, 2026.
- Council reviewed the 2027 Budget and Work Plan.
- Council approved revisions to the Equity and Inclusion Data Initiative Policy.
- Council received an update on the College's government relations efforts including work related to Bill 119.
- Council reviewed and approved the recommendations of the Nominating Committee with respect to statutory and non-statutory committee membership and chairs.
- Reports and evaluations from 2025-2026 were received from the following statutory committees: Executive; Complaints; Discipline; Fitness to Practise; and Registration Appeals.
- Reports and evaluations from 2025-2026 were received from the following non-statutory committees: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Standards of Practice; Election; Nominating; Finance and Audit; and Governance.



Practice Notes

AI: Friend or Foe?

Practice Notes is an educational tool designed to help Ontario social workers, social service workers, employers and members of the public gain a better understanding of recurring issues dealt with by the College's Professional Practice Department and Complaints Committee that may affect everyday practice. The notes offer general guidance only and College registrants[1] with specific practice inquiries should consult the College (or their lawyer for any legal issues), since the relevant standards and appropriate course of action will vary depending on the situation.

Registrants are contacting the Professional Practice Department with questions about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): How can it be used in practice? What are the risks? And, most importantly, what do the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (the Standards) require?

As the use of AI becomes more common and embraced in our professional lives, registrants should recognize that decisions and actions once grounded in research, analysis, and dialogue may now be influenced by information generated by technology. The Professional Practice Department has heard that some registrants have proceeded cautiously in using AI while others have been more willing to implement various aspects of AI. Registrants want to know how the Standards apply and are seeking information from the College in order to ensure that they are practising ethically and competently.

As a baseline, the College's expectation, in all aspects of practice, is that registrants conduct themselves in accordance with the Standards regardless of the technologies that they use in their practice. This means that registrants have a responsibility to both understand their professional obligations and be competent in whatever technologies they are using to meet those obligations.

The College does not recommend particular AI tools, nor does it provide legal or technology advice. It is the registrant's sole responsibility to identify the potential risks associated with any technology they are using and address those risks to meet their professional obligations. What the College can do is help registrants understand how the Standards can arise or apply when AI or any technology is being considered and used. Registrants must also consider their own strategies and protocols for the use of AI as well as other requirements that may apply in their workplace or practice setting and seek consultation with specialists in the technology and legal sectors when needed.

This resource uses practical scenarios to explore themes about the importance of remaining accountable and professional in the presence of AI. Throughout, the focus is on the fact that using AI does not change a registrant's professional responsibilities. Specifically, among other expectations, obligations to provide confidential, accurate and relevant services to clients are discussed within the context of scenarios registrants may find themselves challenged by.

Scenario 1 — Use of AI and the Client Record

A registrant contacts the Professional Practice Department after their workplace introduces an AI tool to scribe client sessions and integrate information into the client record. They asked what the Standards require in this situation.

The Professional Practice staff noted that the use of an AI scribe to capture and synthesize information from a counselling session with a client may affect one of the most significant of rights of clients, their privacy rights. When AI is introduced to summarize specific client information, AI platforms may take information that is inputted and use it for training its system or other unknown uses. Safeguarding of personal data and respect for an individual's privacy must be prioritized by registrants. Clients should be made aware of how registrants may use AI and registrants will want to

[1]Disclaimer: the term "member" and "registrant" are used interchangeably and synonymously as equivalent to the term "member" as used in the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*, and the Regulations.

share with clients what workplace policies exist to protect client information and whether they can decline AI use in their care.

The Professional Practice staff shared information found in both Principle IV: The Social Work and Social Service Work Record and Principle V: Confidentiality[2] in the Standards which describe a registrant's responsibilities regarding records, confidentiality obligations, and that consent from clients must be obtained when collecting, using and disclosing their personal information, with limited exceptions. Principle III: Responsibility to Clients[3] was also reviewed and the registrant was reminded that they must be transparent in describing their services and do so in a manner that clients understand what benefits or risks may result in using their services.

It was also suggested that the registrant review the College's Privacy Toolkit to further their understanding of privacy legislation, and to consider a resource jointly developed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) and the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on AI use[4], as well as recommendations from the Privacy Commissioner of Canada regarding inputting information into AI platforms.[5]

In this scenario, the Professional Practice staff also discussed that AI generated information may include "hallucinations" and non-existent data. Record integrity may be compromised as AI may add inaccurate information into session notes when it recognizes a pattern in a sentence it has noticed with similar data elsewhere in its training models. The registrant was referred to Principle IV: The Social Work and Social Service Work Record: 4.1.4[6] where it explains that registrants must ensure they are not documenting information they know may be false or misleading.

After consulting with the Professional Practice Department, the registrant decided to check with their workplace on their policies on the use of an AI scribe. They will engage with their workplace to support building processes that value client privacy rights, transparency and record integrity.

Scenario 2 — The Use of AI and System Bias

A registrant works for a large city supporting social policies that aim to benefit local communities. They have been asked to develop an affordable housing plan for vulnerable individuals. They are told to use AI to acquire information about various neighbourhoods, such as what services and resources exist, as well as general demographics about individuals living in those neighbourhoods. The registrant is concerned this process will not truly capture the needs of the individuals seeking affordable housing. To make matters more worrisome for the registrant, the future needs of residents were a subject of significant concern at a recent public consultation. The registrant inquires about their work in the context of the Standards.

As supervision is a professional service, and a Professional Practice staff raised the concern that inherently, AI is broadly understood to be adaptive and will learn and evolve over time as users provide new inputs to the models. This means that AI results can vary over time, even with the same inputs, as well as hallucinate information.

Registrants have an obligation to ensure that any professional recommendations or opinions they provide are supported by evidence and a credible body of professional social work or social service work knowledge (Principle II: Competence and Integrity[7]). For registrants, it can be challenging to know for certain if sources of information from AI are valid, or why certain information is provided by an AI platform. Registrants should approach AI generated information with caution and it not a substitute for registrants exercising good, professional judgment. With this in mind, registrants should instead consider the intended goals and outcomes for their clients and focus on appropriate client-focussed interventions. Professional Practice staff shared the following relevant Standards of Practice:

Principle I: Relationship with Clients:

1.2 Goals for relationships between College registrants and clients shall include enhancing clients' functioning and strengthening their capacity to adapt and make changes.[8]

1.3 College registrants shall observe, clarify and inquire about information presented to them by clients.[9]

Principle II: Competence and Integrity:[10]

2.1.6 and 2.1.7 emphasize that registrants should be aware of and understand the population they are serving and competently equip themselves with accurate information and evidence when making decisions.

The Professional Practice staff and the registrant discussed that reliance on AI can mean missing crucial elements of their work. For example, important local knowledge may be lacking, equity-denied groups may be omitted from the planning, or desired community hubs or services may not be considered. It is widely acknowledged that AI risks proportionately affect "Indigenous, racialized or otherwise vulnerable communities and individuals".[11] The more there is dependence on AI, the further the lack of relationship with clients, colleagues and systems which can impact service delivery.

The registrant recognized that depending solely on AI-generated information can overlook important context, nuance and the lived experiences of individuals and communities. Moving forward, they will search data from reliable and relevant sources and engage with the community and residents as they work on the housing plan. They realized that without these steps, issues like fairness, equality and equity might be lost. The registrant understood that it is important not to lose touch with being the "human in the loop" – where rapport and trust is built and where credibility, compassion and concern lie.

Scenario 3 — AI and Professional Guidance

A registrant asked the Professional Practice Department about accessing AI tools in lieu of consultation/supervision/legal consultation because it is cheaper and more accessible. They wondered whether they could enter non-identifying information about a case and receive guidance on legislation, modalities and treatment plans or get feedback on their clinical judgment.

The registrant and Professional Practice staff reflected on how important it is not to assume that AI-generated information is accurate, applicable and current. Making these assumptions could reduce effective and individualized approaches for clients and may even lead to inappropriate or unprofessional services. Ultimately, registrants are required to seek supervision, where appropriate, in order to protect their clients and that supervision is required to be meaningful. When information is inputted into an AI platform it may not account for such things as client body language, non-verbal patterns of behaviour, relational dynamics or other issues that might be relevant in the circumstances. Misaligning services with the client's needs and best interests by AI use can occur at all stages of service, from initial contact to final outcomes.

Further, working in isolation in this way creates no space for new, inventive ways to support clients or for building different models of care or service that may enhance the registrant's practice. This is due to the fact that AI is known to perpetuate and supply information that validates and encourages a pattern, a line of thinking or existing practices rather than debating or challenging them.

Principle II: Competence and Integrity: 2.1.5 and 2.1.8[12] in the Standards indicate that registrants must be committed to ongoing professional development, evaluate their practice and seek supervision and consultation when appropriate.

The registrant concluded that they may not be able to identify the source of information to support their clinical work if obtaining consultation or supervision through AI, or whether the information accurately reflects their clients needs. They also appreciated that AI does not have the ability to critique their conduct in a way that improves their competence nor does it generate options solely for the best interests of each of their clients, or the profession in general. The registrant agreed that they should continue to consult with supervisors, their mentors and communities of practice to reduce risks to clients.

Conclusion

Using AI does not change a registrant's responsibility to practise ethically and competently and in accordance

[2](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle V: Confidentiality, Interpretation 5.1.2
[3](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle III: Responsibility to Clients, Interpretation 3.3
[4]https://www.ipc.on.ca/en/resources/principles-responsible-use-artificial-intelligence
[5]https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/technology/artificial-intelligence/ai-chatbots_ind/
[6](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle IV: The Social Work and Social Service Work Record, interpretation 4.1.4
[7](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle II: Competence and Integrity
[8](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle I: Relationship with Clients, Interpretation 1.2
[9](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle I: Relationship with Clients, Interpretation 1.3
[10](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle II: Competence and Integrity, Interpretations 2.1.6 and 2.1.7
[11]https://www.lco-cdo.org/wp-content/uploads/LCO-Federal-AI-Strategy-Submission-Final-Oct-31-2025.pdf
[12](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle II: Competence and Integrity, Interpretation 2.1.5 and 2.1.8

with the Standards. How and when to use AI, or not, depends on many factors. Reflecting on the Standards, reviewing College resources such as The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Practice, and seeking guidance provided by privacy specialists will support good practice.

Of special note, the College does not regulate organizations that employ social workers and social service workers. Consequently, the policies of organizations may not align with the College's expectations – so registrants must be vigilant and not complicit in a breach of the Standards. Registrants are accountable for their conduct and, if their organization's AI use conflicts with ethical practice, registrants need to advocate for workplace policies that align with the Standards as noted in Principle II: Competence and Integrity: 2.2.18[13]

Consider the following before using AI:

- Do I know what AI does with the information I give it, and where that information is stored?
- Have I obtained the client's informed consent if client information is put into an AI tool, and can the client decline without any effect on their service?
- Am I reviewing and correcting the output received from AI before it becomes part of the client record or a report?
- Can I defend my professional judgment behind my decisions, independent of information obtained through AI?
- Have I verified any citations, legislations etc. that may have quoted before applying it in my work?
- If I am being obligated to use AI by an agency or employer, and I have concerns have I documented and raised these concerns?

As seen in the scenarios, the use of AI and reliance on it have become common in many workplaces. Registrants may be asked to implement AI tools to improve efficiencies, and they may also be considering their own ways to benefit from using AI without assessing the risks or deficits. For these reasons, registrants will want to turn their minds to appreciate decision-making rooted in responsible practices. Registrants make decisions every day that impact clients and they should be able to explain their decisions in the context of transparency, sound research, and meaningful practices.

[13](OCSWSSW), *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*, Principle II: Competence and Integrity, Interpretation 2.2.8

Discipline Decision Summaries

The College publishes summaries of decisions of the Discipline Committee and/or provides links to full-text, neutralized versions of its decisions. Information that is subject to a publication ban or that could reveal the identity of witnesses or clients, including the name of the facility, has been removed as necessary, or has been anonymized. As of January 2019, decisions are also available via the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII).

By publishing decisions, the College endeavours to:

- Illustrate for social workers, social service workers and members of the public, what does or does not constitute professional misconduct.
- Provide social workers and social service workers with direction about the College's standards of practice and professional behaviour, to be applied in future, should they find themselves in similar circumstances.
- Implement the Discipline Committee's decision.
- Provide social workers, social service workers and members of the public with an understanding of the College's discipline process.

Ryan Young #846203
The Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers found that Ryan Young is guilty of professional misconduct. View the decision here:
Ryan Young #846203 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)
Ryan Young #846203 (Reprimand)

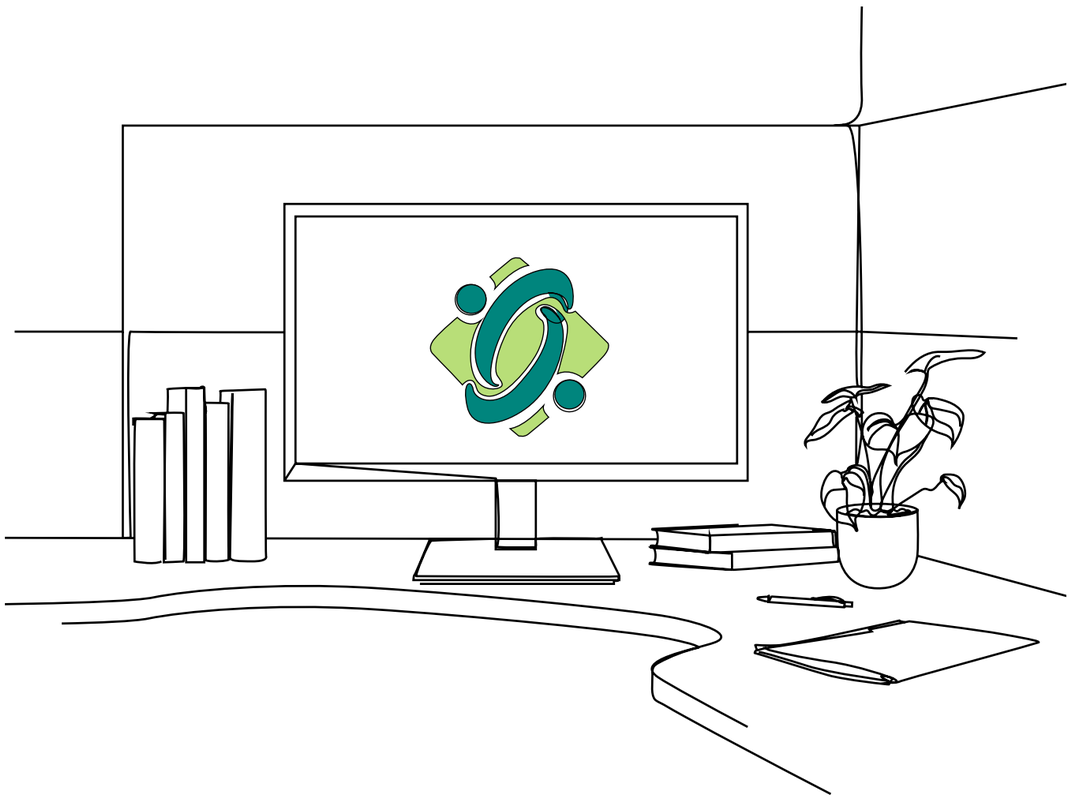
Steve Zehr #833099
Undertaking, Acknowledgment and Agreement
Steve Zehr #833099 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)
Steve Zehr #833099 (Reprimand)

Sharleen Cainer #804081
Undertaking, Acknowledgment and Agreement
Sharleen Cainer #804081 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)

Jeff Packer #803200
The Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers found that Jeff Packer is guilty of professional misconduct. View the decision here:
Penalty
Undertaking, Acknowledgment and Agreement
Jeff Packer #803200 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)

Darrell Jacques #816207
The Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers found that Darrell Jacques is guilty of professional misconduct. View the decision here:
Darrell Jacques #816207 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)
Undertaking, Acknowledgment and Agreement

Breanna Mashinter #821447
Allegations of professional misconduct against the registrant were stayed by the Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. View the decision here:
Breanna Mashinter #821447 (Discipline Decision Summary and Reasons)



College Updates and Reminders

Important information: Change in how registration numbers on the Online Register are displayed

The College has made a security update on how registrants' registration numbers are displayed on the Online Register. Only the last four digits will now show on a registrant's profile. The public can still search using the full registration number; however, once the search is completed, only the last four digits will be visible. This change was implemented in response to registrant feedback to help protect registration information from being used in fraudulent insurance-related activities, while maintaining the ability for the public to search for the practitioners.

If you have any questions about this change, contact the Registration and Renewals Department at info@ocswssw.org.

Chosen Name Recognition Policy

Earlier this year, College Council approved the Chosen Name Recognition Policy. This policy states that a registrant can request a name change even if they have not legally changed their name but are now going by a chosen name.

Registrants can request a name change through their profile in the Online Portal. The name change request will ask registrants for the following information:

- Former name(s)
- New name(s)
- A copy of an official government document that shows your new name(s) (e.g. a change of name certificate, marriage certificate or divorce decree) **OR** if the registrant has not legally changed their name, confirmation that they are using a chosen name instead of their legal name

Former name(s), new name(s) and the name used in practice will be posted on the Online Register. Former names are included to ensure that previous clients can look up registrants even if they do not know the registrants' current name. If publication of a registrants' previous name(s) or legal name may jeopardize their safety, please include this information in the request.

More information on name changes can be found in the Chosen Name Recognition Policy.

Update on the Continuing Competence Program review

The College's comprehensive review of the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) is underway. Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and perspectives through the CCP Survey and Open Input Form. This feedback will help the College better

understand changing practice realities and identify ways to ensure the CCP remains current, practical, supportive and responsive across diverse settings and sectors.

The College engaged with consulting firm Rigor to review the feedback and is now considering how the CCP's adult learning approach can be strengthened and better aligned with current practice. Further updates will be shared as the project progresses. Learn more about the CCP review.

This review does not affect the 2026 CCP. Registrants must complete their 2026 CCP requirements as usual.

Registrant feedback was critical to this project, and completion of the survey can be used as a learning activity as part of the 2026 CCP.

Registration now open for Practice Notes: In Conversation

Every autumn, the College holds an event called the Educational Forum. This event was originally conceived of as a smaller version of our Annual Meeting and Education Day (AMED). Over the last few years, the College has transitioned this event to a standalone resource, which allows us to provide sessions that offer more in-depth professional and ethical guidance to registrants.

To continue this evolution, the College is repositioning and rebranding the Educational Forum as a video practice resource series that can enhance registrants' knowledge in practising ethically and professionally. Building from the successful written Practice Notes series, the Educational Forum will now be known as Practice Notes: In Conversation.

This approach reflects the College's priority to making regulatory information available in accessible and user-friendly formats. Registrants engage with information and learn in different ways. Offering complementary written, video and virtual practice resources provides multiple pathways to engage with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice while reinforcing professional and ethical considerations.

Save the date for the upcoming **Practice Notes: In Conversation.**

Date: Thursday, November 26, 2026
Time: 9:30-11:00 a.m.
Format: Fully virtual
Cost: Free

Professional Practice staff will deliver an interactive presentation that explores how registrants can navigate situations where serving in the client's best interest comes into conflict with external pressures, and what a registrant's obligations are under the Standards of Practice in these circumstances.

REGISTER NOW

For questions about the Practice Notes: In Conversation resource series, contact the Communications Department at communications@ocswssw.org.

Mark your calendars: Annual renewals are coming soon

Annual renewals for 2027 will open later this fall. All registrants in the general, inactive and retired classes of registration must renew their registration each year, on or before December 31. This includes registrants who were issued a certificate of registration at any time in 2026.

To prepare for renewal:

- Confirm that your contact and employment information is up to date.
- Complete your 2026 Continuing Competence Program requirements.
- Renew early to avoid last-minute delays.
- Remember that renewals are based on the calendar year, not the date you first registered.

More information, including step-by-step renewal tips, will be shared when renewals open. Visit the College's Annual Renewals webpage for helpful resources.

For questions about annual renewals, contact the Registration and Renewals Department at info@ocswssw.org.

Register for the fall Coffee with the College sessions

Join the College's Professional Practice Team for the upcoming Coffee with the College sessions. This interactive monthly lunch-and-learn series explores common ethical and practice dilemmas encountered by registrants. Each session includes a brief presentation followed by an opportunity to ask questions and participate in live consultations with Professional Practice staff.

An upcoming session will take place from noon to 1 p.m.:

- Wednesday, November 25 – Completing Your Continuing Competence Program and Annual Registration Renewals **(offered in English)**

Registration is limited, and registrants are encouraged to book their spot early. Please note that these sessions are intended to provide live consultations and will not be recorded.

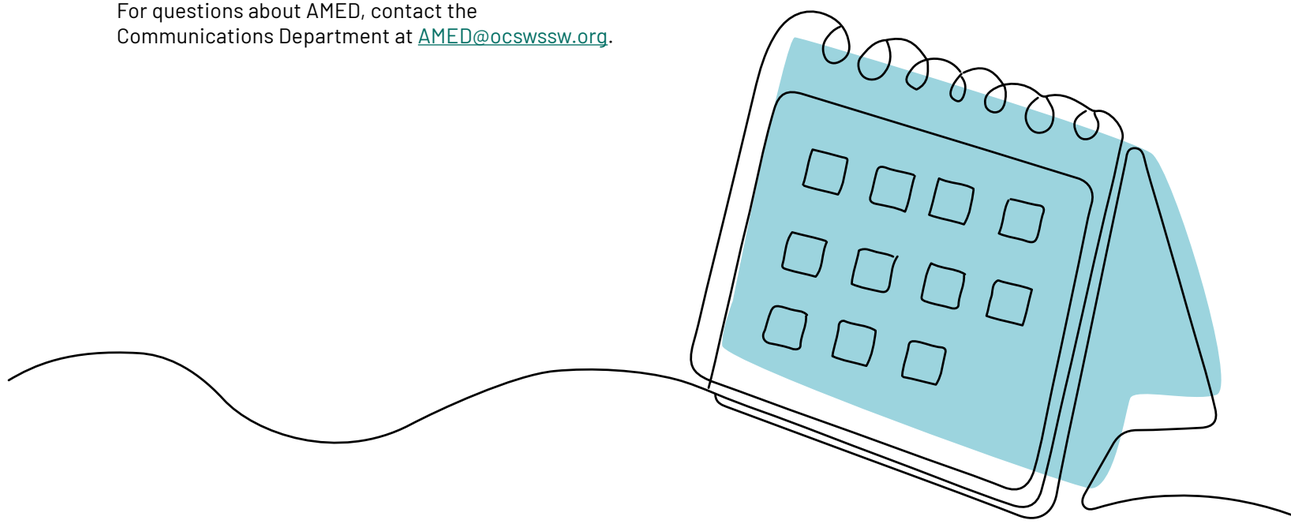
For questions about Coffee with the College, contact the Professional Practice Department at practice@ocswssw.org.

ICYMI: AMED 2026 recordings are available

The College's 2026 Annual Meeting and Education Day (AMED) took place on June 9 under the theme Trust, Care and Accountability. Recordings from the annual meeting, feature presentation and select educational sessions are now available on the College's website and YouTube channel.

These recordings can serve as valuable professional development resources and may be used as learning activities toward the completion of the CCP.

For questions about AMED, contact the Communications Department at AMED@ocswssw.org.



Bulletin Board

Change of information notification

If your information changes, you must notify the College within 30 days of the change to ensure that the College's records remain current.

Keep your employer and address information up to date

If you change employers or your address changes, you must notify the College in writing.

The College is required to make the registrants' current business address available to the public. If your home address is also your business address, your home address will therefore be publicly visible on the Online Register.

If you do not want your home address to be publicly displayed, you must provide the College with an alternate address, such as a P.O. Box, that may be listed as your business address instead.

You can notify the College of a change of address through the Online Portal or by emailing your new employer or business address to info@ocswssw.org. Please include your College registration number when contacting the College.

Change of preferred email address

The College requires all registrants to provide a valid, unique email address. It is essential that you keep your email address up to date to ensure you receive important updates or information from us. To access the Online Portal and manage your registrant account, please use the preferred email address on file.

Name change

If you change your name or use a different name other than the one you registered with when providing social work or social service work services, you must advise the College of both your former name(s) and your new name(s) in writing and include a copy of your change of name certificate, marriage certificate, marriage licence or other evidence of legal name change. If your name differs from your legal name because you use a chosen name you have not legally adopted, you do not need to provide evidence of a legal name change. For detailed information, please refer to the College's Chosen Name Recognition Policy.

You may submit your name change request through the Online Portal under the "Request" tab.

Updates to academic information

If you wish to update your education information, you must ask your academic institution to send your official transcript directly to the College via MyCreds or Parchment. If your academic institution does not use a third-party platform for transcript transmission, the official transcript may be emailed directly by your academic institution to info@ocswssw.org.

Perspective is the official registrant publication of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers.

How to Reach Us

The College is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

250 Bloor Street East Suite 1000
Toronto, Ontario M4W 1E6

Telephone: 416-972-9882
Toll-Free: 1-877-828-9380
Fax: 416-972-1512
Email: info@ocswssw.org
Website: ocswssw.org

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If you require this publication in an alternate format, contact the College at 1-877-828-9380 or communications@ocswssw.org

Who to Contact at the College

Registration and Renewals

For general and renewal inquiries, please email info@ocswssw.org.

Office of the Registrar

If you wish to contact the Office of the Registrar, or are seeking information related to the College Council, please email oor@ocswssw.org.

Professional Practice

For professional practice inquiries, please email: practice@ocswssw.org.

For inquiries related to the Continuing Competence Program (CCP), please email: ccp@ocswssw.org.

Communications

For inquiries regarding the College's website, newsletter, Annual Report and other publications, please email: communications@ocswssw.org.

Professional Conduct

For information on complaints, discipline and mandatory reporting, please email: investigations@ocswssw.org.

If you are aware of any individual who is illegally using a protected title and/or holding themselves out as a social worker or a social service worker, you may report this information to the College at titleprotection@ocswssw.org.

Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers