

Alberta Supervised Pastoral Education Communique

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Hello once again to all of our stakeholders for Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). The Alberta Consortium for Supervised Pastoral Education (AC-SPE) Steering Committee is grateful for all of your thoughtful and wise support, especially during this past very difficult year with the worldwide pandemic. Over a year ago, we issued a communique that told of many advances and updates to the functioning of our AC-SPE Program. In this communique, you will read about some adjustments to the learning method that Supervisor-Educators had to make in order to continue offering CPE programs, as well as the bruises and bumps encountered along the way. In this communique, you will also read about the AC-SPE Program's achievement and celebration of 5 years accreditation, the maximum that CASC/ACSS allows.

CPE Program Changes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The First CPE Bump with COVID-19

Just as the Extended September 2019 to March 2020 CPE Program was drawing to a close, Alberta announced the first round of COVID-19 restrictions to save the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. Supervisor-Educators (S-Es) jumped into action to devise a way of closing the CPE program, mindful that we wanted to duly celebrate the accomplishments of the students. Students had already achieved most, if not all of their expected clinical hours during the course of their CPE program. However, the classroom setting had changed due to University restrictions imposed on in-class learning. This meant that the Supervisor-Educators along with the Dean of our Colleges had to do some quick thinking to bring about another way to celebrate the students' completion of their CPE program. Fortunately our colleges were already equipped with zoom technology which enabled each student to join a link and have the closing celebrations online.

CPE Temporarily Halted Due to COVID-19

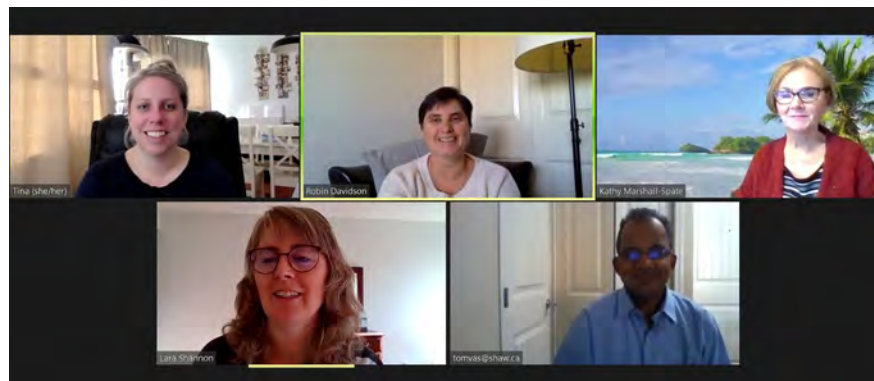
At the same time, Supervisor-Educators were also preparing for the May to July 2020, Intensive CPE Program as COVID-19 cases were increasing, and while Hospitals, Assisted Living and Long Term Care Centres were experiencing more restrictions and outbreaks within their facilities. To deliver an entire CPE Program in this climate was a much larger challenge than having closing celebrations online for a few days. The Supervisor-Educators were not prepared for such a big challenge and change. Again, the AC-SPE Program Steering Committee along with the Supervisor-Educators needed to revision their model of delivering in-class seminar learning.



CPE Programs are heavily reliant upon Student Placement Policies within the clinical placement settings. With the quickly spreading pandemic, Student Placement in collaboration with their own authorities and the Educational Institutions delivering programs with clinical placements in Hospitals and Long Term Care Centers, decided to cancel all student placements for the spring and summer of 2020. A good group of CPE students had already applied, been interviewed and accepted into the CPE program and we were sad to inform them of the cancellation. However, this gave S-Es time to revision how they might deliver the seminar portion of the CPE Program, if CPE was to move forward and learn to live with the pandemic.

CPE Programs Learning to Live with the COVID-19 Pandemic

The cancellation of the Intensive Summer program in 2020 allowed S-Es to take some time and think through delivery of the seminar portion of the CPE program to an online platform. Calgary and Edmonton S-Es then developed and planned for an orientation week to be offered through zoom to all students of all programs (2 Calgary programs and 2 Edmonton programs). This collaborative effort led to the continued sharing of resources and created some efficiencies within the CPE programs. Subsequently, Calgary and Edmonton CPE programs have experimented in a variety of ways with the use of online learning such as sharing didactic sessions, case study conferences and morning reflections amongst all groups. IPR (Interpersonal Relations Group) and Individual Supervision also happened online, but in break out rooms or other zoom links to allow each group to remain separate from the other groups. A typical seminar day for the Extended and Intensive groups from September 2020 to end of July 2021 looked like this: students gathered online from their homes via their zoom links and were guided by their S-Es (also online) through the presentation of their case studies and didactic presentations. Meanwhile, for the clinical portion of the CPE program, students could once again go to their placement sites as Hospitals and Long Term Care Centres were putting restrictive measures and protocols in place to allow students to continue their learning amidst COVID-19 outbreaks and restrictions.



Opportunities and Drawbacks to Online Learning

While the Provincial CPE Program learned to use their resources more efficiently, there were also some drawbacks noted to online learning. For instance and most notably, an IPR group online does not capture full body language. The same could be said for other group presentations through online learning. Students also missed the comradery of gathering together in one classroom, but were grateful not to have to travel, especially in the winter, and pay for parking. The silver lining of the pandemic was that it pushed collaborators and stakeholders of CPE into creative and efficient utilization of resources.

A New Hybrid Model Emerges

Currently as of September, 2021, CPE programs are back in class at respective Colleges and sites (St. Stephen's College – Edmonton; Ambrose/Foothills Hospital – Calgary), but continue to offer online delivery of didactics and morning reflections with the Calgary and Edmonton groups together.

Achieving Accreditation with the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS)

A Brief Recapture of 2016-2020

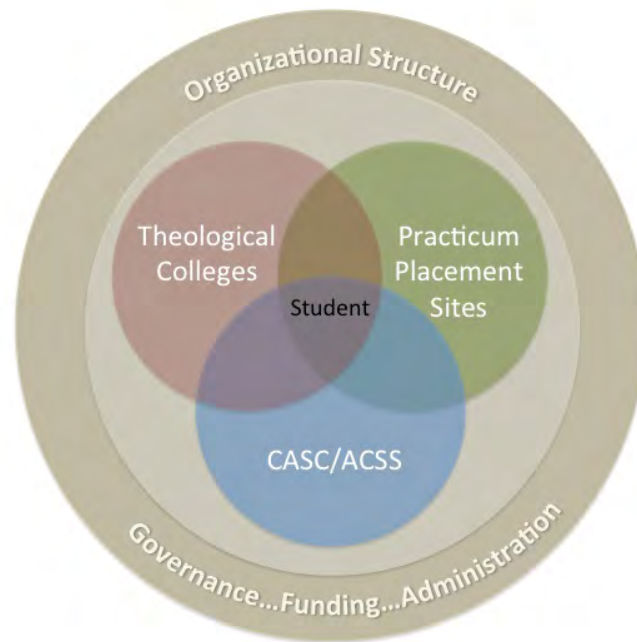
There has been another big milestone and achievement since our last communique in February of 2020. With the hiring of a Coordinator (Darlene Pranke) and an Administrative Assistant (Salimah Mohamed) for the AC-SPE Program, dedicated time was put towards preparing the provincial CPE program for an Accreditation review with CASC/ACSS. To offer CPE or PCE, an Education Centre must first seek Program Approval and then proceed to seeking Program Accreditation within CASC/ACSS. In 2016, the AC-SPE Program received a three-year Program Approval, meaning that Alberta Supervisor-Educators could provide CPE with the existing approval of CASC/ACSS until the end of 2019. In 2019, the AC-SPE Steering Committee and Supervisor-Educators felt that they were not ready to request a review for accreditation due to much change and newness while establishing the new CPE program structure from its near death in 2013. Hence, they requested a one year extension that was granted by CASC/ACSS and that took the CPE Program to 2020.

CPE in 2020 and On

Over the past 12 plus months, extensive work took place to review and create new policies, to harmonize some curriculum components, to reformat tools and templates of the CPE program, and to standardize all of the CPE documents to reflect CPE as a provincial program. A Self-Study Committee was put together comprised of members from various disciplines who had some knowledge of CPE programs. Their task was to review all CPE documents from their various perspectives and make suggestions that could enhance the CPE program from the eyes of other disciplines. In January 2020, a formal request for Accreditation with CASC/ACSS was made and the AC-SPE Steering Committee welcomed a Site Visit Team appointed by the CASC/ACSS Accreditation Committee to conduct online meetings through zoom in early March of 2021. The Site Visit Team consisted of two CASC/ACSS members from Ontario and one from Saskatchewan. They reviewed all of Alberta's CPE Program documents, as well as the administration, organization and functioning of our CPE program, to make sure that everything within the Alberta CPE program is functional, current, and in alignment with CASC/ACSS standards. The Site Visit Team met (online through zoom) with a number of Stakeholders of CPE (current students, Preceptors, Supervisor-Educators, Senior and Local Administrators, Allied and Nursing staff, and the Steering Committee that oversees the governance and funding of CPE). The beauty of a Site Visit Team from outside of Alberta is the overarching perspective they gain from meeting with various CPE stakeholders. Their perspective goes beyond a single voice that cannot possibly see the overall workings of the program.

Celebration

On March 4th, 2021, the Provincial CPE Program was accredited with 5 years which takes the program to 2026. Alberta's CPE stakeholders were so happy and proud to have achieved the maximum of 5 years accreditation. A lot of hard work was put into making sure our CPE program is in top shape and thanks goes to many people who have helped make it such. This does not mean our work is done. The work continues and the CPE Program is continually evolving as it should.



Footnote: The Canadian Association for Spiritual Care/Association canadienne de soins spirituels (CASC/ACSS) is the umbrella association which sets the Education Standards and Standards of Practice for all CPE programs. For more information about the broader history of CPE in Alberta, you may obtain access to a journal article written by Dr. Darlene Pranke and Dr. Margaret Clark, published in the Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, Volume 74 Issue 4, 2020, pages 241-249.

Written by Darlene Pranke, Coordinator for the Alberta Consortium for Supervised Pastoral Education Program