

# Lowering the Bar on Mental Health: Why Ontarians should be concerned

## OUR READERS WRITE:

Becoming a psychologist in Ontario has always been a long, rigorous, and carefully regulated process and that is intentional. Psychologists work in areas that directly affect people's safety, mental health, learning, legal outcomes, and long-term wellbeing. The high standards exist to protect the public.

Psychologists do far more than provide therapy. They are among the few regulated professionals with the legal authority to diagnose. They diagnose learning disabilities, autism, and psychiatric disorders. They conduct assessments that influence school accommodations, disability supports, court decisions, public safety planning, treatment access, and more.

In my own practice as a clinical forensic psychologist, I conduct specialized assessments that help determine whether someone poses a risk of violence, whether they are fit to stand trial, or whether they are ready to be released from custody. These are high-stakes decisions that shape lives and affect public safety.

These responsibilities cannot be done safely with shortcuts.

## What the College Is Proposing

The College has proposed sweeping changes that would reduce psychologist training by up to 75%. These include:

Cutting supervised hours by up to 75%

Removing accredited training requirements

Eliminating specialty areas such as school, clinical, forensic, or neuropsychology

Replacing ethics exams with a no-fail module

Removing the final oral exam that confirms a candidate is competent and safe

Under this model, I, trained in forensic psychology, would technically be permitted to conduct neuropsychological assessments for brain injury or early dementia. I have zero training in neuropsychology, and ethically I never would. But candidates trained under a drastically reduced model may not fully understand their limits or may be pressured to do everything.

The implication is clear: Ontario could soon have large numbers of professionals legally allowed to diagnose, but without the training to do so.

This is how people get misdiagnosed.

This is how children lose access to essential school supports.

This is how important safety risks get missed.

## Why This Matters for Ontarians

Lower training standards will have real consequences. Even small increases in misdiagnosis or inadequate care carry significant financial and human costs. Research and provincial data show:

A 10% rise in misdiagnosis of bipolar disorder could cost taxpayers roughly \$244 million annually.

A 10% increase in misdiagnosis among youth with complex mental health needs adds an estimated \$15 million per year.

A conservative 3% rise in suicide attempts linked to inadequate or non-evidence-based care could cost Ontario an additional \$40 million annually.

Lowering standards does not save money. It increases suffering, increases demand for services, and increases long-term costs.

But Isn't This About Access?

The College argues that lowering training standards will increase access to care. But access to what? Faster appointments with less qualified clinicians?

Ontario would never improve access to family doctors by cutting medical school or replacing exams with no-fail modules. Yet psychology?the profession responsible for diagnosing mental health and learning conditions?is being asked to accept dramatically reduced standards.

There Is a Better Way to Improve Access

Access challenges stem from chronic underfunding, high private-sector costs, and a long-standing shortage of psychologists in public settings?not from current licensing standards. Ontario has significantly more psychologists than psychiatrists, yet, only 12% of psychologists work in hospital, government funded positions. Reducing training will not fix these systemic issues.

We already have a proven model that expands access without lowering standards: the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) Program. OSP expanded access to free, evidence-based care. Psychologists as systems leaders, led the design, developed training, supervised teams, ensure quality, and evaluate outcomes?while social workers, psychotherapists, and other trained providers deliver high-quality care at scale.

This is how you increase access: through strong systems, not lowered qualifications.

Why This Matters for You and Your Family

Think of your child struggling to learn.

A teen having suicidal thoughts.

An aging parent with early memory loss.

A young person in the justice system needing a fair assessment.

Would you want their diagnosis made by someone trained under a drastically reduced model?

If not, your voice matters?now.

When Is Action Needed?

Complete the College's survey before December 9:

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/BZ5SB8Q](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BZ5SB8Q)

For more information and resources, visit the Psychology Advocacy Network (PAN): [www.psychadvocacy.ca](http://www.psychadvocacy.ca)

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