



**South African
Council for Social Service Professions**



**CARING, CONNECTING &
ADVOCATING IN TROUBLED TIMES**

**INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WEEK
4 - 10 MAY 2026**

Mr Lucky Jacobs - Member of the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work

We are living in times where children and youth are troubled by many social ills and at the forefront of these is the substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and parenting, and the lack of access to specialised services for those living with special needs. Our advocacy for them at, any level, needs to reflect adequate and appropriate care, and create meaningful connections.

Honouring the Heart of Child and Youth Care Work

NON NOBIS - *Not for ourselves*



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Ms Ida Strydom - Chairperson of the Professional Board for Social Work

As you step into spaces where care is needed most, you are the people to create moments of safety where there is fear, connection where there is isolation, and hope where it may feel like nobody cares. Through a listening ear, a steady presence, or a small act of kindness, you remind young people that they matter. This may seem simple, but it is powerful as it builds trust, restore dignity, and plant the seeds of resilience.

Continue to speak up for those whose voices are often unheard. Challenge systems, push for better outcomes, and stand firm in your commitment to justice and wellbeing for the young people you are interacting with on a daily basis.

Take a moment to care for yourself as well. Your wellbeing matters just as much as the work you do. Supporting others begins with sustaining your own strength.

An illustration of three young people running and pushing a stroller. One person is pushing the stroller, another is running alongside it, and a third is running ahead. They are all smiling and appear to be in a joyful, energetic state. The background is a dark green circle with a light green path leading through it.

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Ms Charlene Singh - Member of the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work

As we mark International Child and Youth Care Week 2026, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all Child and Youth Care Workers for the compassionate and meaningful work you do each day. In times of uncertainty and challenge, your presence brings hope, healing, stability, and connection to children, youth, families, and communities.

This year's theme, Caring, Connecting, and Advocating in Troubled Times, reflects the heart of the profession and the important role you continue to play in creating safe spaces, building relationships, and standing alongside those in need.

Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to care and advocacy. Your work matters deeply and continues to make a lasting difference.

An illustration of three people running towards the right. A man in a yellow shirt is pushing a stroller with a woman in a blue shirt sitting inside. A man in a purple shirt is running alongside them, looking back over his shoulder. The background is a dark green circle with a light green path leading through it.

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Mr. Malekutu Lafter Molawo - Member of the Professional Board for Social Work

These are indeed challenging times—marked by social, emotional, and economic uncertainties that deeply affect the children, youth, and families you serve. Yet, in the midst of these difficulties, your role remains a pillar of hope and stability. Through your care, you provide safety and healing. Through your connections, you build trust and belonging. Through your advocacy, you give a voice to the most vulnerable.

Your commitment goes beyond professional duty; it reflects a deep calling to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. You continue to stand at the forefront, ensuring that no child or young person is left unseen or unheard. This dedication strengthens families, uplifts communities, and contributes to a more just and compassionate society.

We acknowledge the emotional demands of your work and encourage you to also care for yourselves and one another. Let us continue to support, empower, and inspire each other as we navigate these troubled times together.

Thank you for your resilience, your passion, and your unwavering commitment to caring, connecting, and advocating.

An illustration of three diverse people (two men and one woman) running together in a circular frame. One man is pushing a stroller with a child inside, while the other two are running alongside him, all appearing joyful and determined.

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Prof Varoshini Nadesan - Member of the Professional Board for Social Work

This year's theme on "Caring, Connecting, and Advocating in Troubled Times" allows us to navigate these three pillars of resilience within the Child and Youth care space. When Caring, we practice presence, comfort and empathy; Similarly when Connecting, we listen to understand; we aim to remove another from isolation. When practicing Advocating in troubled times, we must support the vulnerable and less fortunate and be a voice for those young people who face issues that hinder their growth and development. May we lend our voices to support and advocate for our children this week and every day.

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