



SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS

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INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK WEEK 2026: CARING, CONNECTING AND ADVOCATING IN TROUBLED TIMES

The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) proudly joins the global community in celebrating *International Child and Youth Care Work Week*, taking place from 4 to 10 May 2026. This annual observance honours the vital role of child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers who dedicate their lives focussing on the developmental and therapeutic needs of vulnerable children and youth across diverse settings.

This year's theme, "*Caring, Connecting and Advocating in Troubled Times*", speaks directly to the challenges of our era - a world marked by instability, inequality and displacement. Child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers, as part of the social service professions family in the country, stand firm for the rights of children while providing the required development and therapeutic interventions which assist children to navigate challenges, hurt and the complexities of life.

Child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers witness human suffering and brokenness both locally and globally. Wars, violence, inequality and other societal challenges deepen in communities, which in turn impacts the lives of many children. It is against this backdrop that these practitioners render services to some of the most vulnerable and at risk children in communities, where they offer compassionate and professional presence, stand with the marginalised and embody solidarity and courage.

International Child and Youth Care Workers Week provides an opportunity to:

- recognise and uplift the profession and its practitioners.
- raise public awareness about the importance of child and youth care work in building safer communities.
- celebrate the resilience, skill and dedication of those working with vulnerable children and families.
- advocate for just systems, policies and resources that better serve children, youth and families.
- reflect on professional practice and renew commitment to relationship-based care.

In South Africa, the profession of child and youth care work is a regulated profession under the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 and no person may practice as child and youth care worker and/or auxiliary child and youth care worker if her or she is not registered with the SACSSP, adhere to the professions code of ethics and meet the prescribed educational requirements. The titles associated with child and youth care work, i.e., *child and youth care worker* and *auxiliary child and youth care worker* are protected by law and only persons who are registered with the SACSSP may use these titles as prescribed in section 15(1) of the Act. The Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work is responsible for regulating of the requirements regarding who may enter the profession (be registered), the education, training and development of child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers, and the professional conduct of these practitioners.

Private Bag X12, Gezina, Pretoria 0031 37 Annie Botha Ave, Riviera, Pretoria
(012) 356 8300 www.sacssp.co.za

communications@sacssp.co.za

NON NOBIS – Not for ourselves

Together with the entire world, the SACSSP calls on all child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers, professional associations, partner organisations and stakeholders to:

- appreciate that child and youth care work is a regulated profession in the country.
- practice as required with the scopes of practice and the code of ethics for child and youth care work.
- demonstrate professional practice focusing on what is in the best interest of every child.
- champion justice and the advancement of the human rights of children.
- enhance the dignity and integrity of the child and youth care work profession.
- advance professional practice so it is experienced powerfully by those served.

International Child and Youth Care Work Week 2026 serves as a vital occasion to honour the courage, resilience and commitment of child and youth care workers and auxiliary child and youth care workers for championing quality and professional services for children who are vulnerable and at risk, and who are often “invisible” in the decision making structures of world.

Let us celebrate their contribution of social service professions, and during this week in particular child and youth care work, and renew our collective commitment to building a more compassionate and just society.

ISSUED BY: SACSSP Communications

ENQUIRIES:

Lungelwa Mbuzo

(073) 299 2720 | LungiM@sacssp.co.za

ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SERVICE PROFESSIONS

The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) is a statutory body established in terms of section 2 of the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 (“the Act”) with the purpose to regulate the social service professions; and has two Professional boards under its auspices: the Professional Board for Social Work and the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work. The SACSSP, in conjunction with its Professional Boards, regulates the professions of social work and child youth care work in aspects pertaining to registration (entry to the professions); education and training (qualifications); professional conduct and ethical behaviour; ensuring continuing professional development; and fostering compliance with standards for professional practice. By regulating the professions, it protects the integrity of the social service professions as well as the interest of the public at large. To safeguard the public and indirectly the professions, registration with the SACSSP in terms of the Act is a prerequisite before practicing social work and child and youth care work. Registration is a legal requirement for social workers, social auxiliary workers, student social workers, learner social auxiliary workers, child and youth care workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers and student child and youth care workers.