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# Child Youth Work

Tribute to Nelson Mandela A Journal for Those Who Work with Orphaned, Vulnerable and At-risk Children and Youth and their Families

Marie Company



# I wonder how I will feel... Merle Allsopp

I keep wondering how I will feel when I hear that 'our' regulations have been signed? Let's be a little less in-house about this...'our' regulations are, of course, the proposed regulations to the Social Services Professions Act 110 of 1978 that will provide the legal mechanism to allow for the registration of child and youth care workers with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. The field has referred to these as 'our' regulations over the many years that they have been in the process of being developed – a process that began well before many of our new generation of child and youth care workers were even born!

The NACCW has been operating in the advocacy space around the issue of the statutory regulation of child and youth care workers for the past three decades. Many people may not know that in the pre-democracy years our Association set up a 'shadow' registration process where child and youth care workers could choose to register as child and youth care workers with the NACCW. At that point the hope of establishing a statutory body was, of course, just a dream. But around the country there were registration ceremonies held at regional NACCW meetings. At these ceremonies child and youth care workers who had completed the BQCC and worked for over two years proclaimed in a public oath, their commitment to a set of ethics which would govern their professional practice. I remember the feeling I had

when I registered – reading out that code of ethics and promising to uphold them. Even though this was not a registration process that held legal powers, it was still a momentous moment. Signing my name in the register felt solemn and important. With the advent of democracy came the opportunity for our field to advocate to change the then Social Work Act to allow for the regulation of a range of social service professions. This took some hard work and negotiating, but since the White Paper had referred to the necessity of a range of social service professions to provide social services in a 'new' South africa, it followed that there had to be provision made for the regulation of such workers, So when the Social Service Professions Act was born, we (as child and youth work) thought we were home and dry on the issue of regulation of the field.

But then came the fifteen year process of making regulation a reality! What a roller-coaster ride these years have been! In terms of the Act, NACCW applied for the establishment of a Professional Board for Child and Youth Care (PBCYC). YES! The first election of members to serve on the PBCYC followed. YAY! The Minister took some time to inaugurate the PBCYC. OH! The PBCYC got going with its work and produced proposed regulations to the Act – to allow child and youth care workers to register at auxiliary and professional levels. GREAT! The regulations were rejected by the SACSSP. OH NO! The regulations were adjusted

(seventeen times) and resubmitted to the SACSSP - and rejected. WHAT? The first PBCYC ended its term of office without being able to register any child and youth care workers, and there was then no voters roll to vote in the new PCBYC and everything came to a standstill, NO! NO! NO! After NACCW advocating with the Minister, an interim body of stakeholders drove the process of working on the regulation of child and youth care workers, MAYBE??? A new PBCYC was voted in YES! The PBCYC worked hard to revise and resubmit the regulations to the SCASSP.YES! SACSSP accepted them, YAY! YAY! YAY! SACSSP submitted the regulations for the legal processes. WOW! They went out for public comment in the Government Gazette.YES!YES!YES!

And here we are...having cut a long story short, at the point where, after calling for public comment on the regulations and adjusting them accordingly, the next step is to wait for the Minister to sign them into law! And how will we as child and youth care workers feel when it happens? I am still wondering. Speaking for myself I am expecting to feel...elated, joyful, relieved, thankful, humbled, hopeful, blessed... And I think I might shed tears for the sheer privilege of living in a democratic country, a democratic South Africa, where we as citizens can impact on public policy and can affect systemic change to improve the lives of our orphaned, vulnerable and at-risk children.

### Child & Youth Care Work



# "It always seems impossible until it's done." **Nelson Mandela**



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