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Is South African Child and Youth Care Work be entering new development phase?

By Merle Allsopp

In May of this year the new Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Workers (PBCYC) was inaugurated by Minister Dlamini at an event held in Gauteng, along with the new Professional Board for Social Work and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). This followed a gap of eight months in which the PBCYC was not functioning, due to the term of office of the previous board coming to an end, and delays in the completion of the election of people to sit on the new PBCYC.

It is well known that the previous Board was successful in *finally* getting regulations passed to create a legislative context for the registration of child and youth care workers with the SACSSP. It is also well known that over 7000 child and youth care workers had submitted applications for registration by July of last year. One can imagine that that figure should be higher than 7000 by now.

Disappointingly, few of these applications have been processed, and we find child and youth care workers across the country anxiously awaiting information on their registration status. In fact, a message went out to the sector earlier this year urging people not to re-register given the administrative backlog. This has been unfortunate as the field responded to the registration call with enthusiasm – but it seems the administration of Council has

not been as responsive as would have been expected in processing these applications. Many child and youth care workers expressed being disheartened as a result. However, the information that is emanating from Council (see page 34 for reprints of two recent media statements made the SACSSP) point to dramatic positive changes at the Council.

Importantly, one statement informs the public of the termination of the services of the Registrar. It also acknowledges that "Council was plagued with many administrative issues, as a result of the Registrar's conduct while in office". This tells the public and the sector that there have indeed been difficulties at Council – and can explain the problem that child and youth care workers have experienced with getting registered. What is important here is that we can see in this communication an open and transparent approach being taken by Council in relation to its core business – the registration of social service practitioners. We see that action has been taken to rectify a troubled situation, and Council is letting us know that it is taking responsibility for the situation. Further, the communique asks for "the sector to support [the] secretariat and the entire Council during this period of transition".

This communication and other information that is being regularly circulated by Council updating the sector on 'this week at

SACSSP' speaks to a new era at Council, and potentially a new era for child and youth care work. With the regulations in place, the registration process starting to happen as efficiently as it should, and an open and positive Council and PBCYC, the Board can use its term of office to work on the many points that were identified by past (and present) PBCYC chairperson Aziwe Magida, as important in developing the field further.

These include: making tertiary educational opportunities available for child and youth care workers, as well as bursaries for study purposes; opening up articulation opportunities for those who have completed the FETC; articulating continuous professional development requirements for child and youth care workers; the creation of more child and youth care posts within government; advocating for an appropriate employment framework; diversifying practice environments for child and youth care workers; and conscientising the public on child and youth care work as a profession.

This is list is a tall order, but it seems that we have the perfect conditions coming together to make for a conducive environment in which the PBCYC will be able to do its work. Dare we say that South African child and youth care work could be entering a new development phase? I think so, yes we are! ■

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