

Date: 12/3/2016

To: Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS)

Att: The medical advisory committee, The finance committee

Re: Registered Counselors

Dear Medical Scheme colleagues

On behalf of PsySSa Registered Counselors and Psychometrists Executive Committee, I would like to urgently address an important matter with you.

The Board of Psychology has many divisions ranging from clinical, counseling and research psychologists; psychometrists; psychotechnicians and registered counselors. Each category completes a postgraduate degree in psychology, a supervised internship and then goes on to write a board examination set by HPCSA (Health Professions Council of South Africa). Each category is provided with a scope of practice and falls directly within the Board of Psychology, HPCSA.

As a fellow registered counselor, my concern lies in the allocation of funds for 2016 for our category of registered counselors. As per the benefits structure of GEMS, a benefit for psychology is allocated to each medical aid member. This benefit up until 31 December 2015 included the services of a registered counselor. As of January 2016 this benefit ceased to include registered counselors, who have now been allocated a block benefit that is shared with social workers under the category of Allied Health. Perhaps this is an oversight on behalf of GEMS or a misunderstanding of the Registered Counselor category. According to the call centre agents at GEMS, they have been informed that a registered counselor is the same as a social worker and that they complete the same tasks. I would thus like to enlighten the GEMS team responsible for the change of the huge distinction between registered counselors and social workers.

Registered counselors do not belong to an Allied health category. We belong to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) under the Board of Psychology. We write a board examination and obtain a practice number from HPCSA which is completely independent from that of social workers. To further explain this important difference I would like to make reference to the following (kindly refer to the attachments):

Registered Counselor

Scope of practice:

- the evaluation of behaviour or mental processes or personality adjustments or adjustments of individuals or of groups of persons, through the use of interpretation of any psychological test, questionnaire, instrument, apparatus, device or similar method for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, interests, personality make-up or personality functioning, and the diagnosis or measurement of personality and emotional functions, neuropsychological disorders and mental functioning deficiencies according to a recognised scientific system for the classification of mental deficiencies;
- the use of any psychological method or practice aimed at aiding persons or groups of persons in the adjustment of personality, emotional or behavioural problems or at the

promotion of positive personality change, growth and development, and the identification and evaluation of personality dynamics and personality functioning according to scientific psychological methods;

- the evaluation of emotional, behavioural and cognitive processes or adjustment of personality of individuals or groups of persons by the usage and interpretation of psychological questionnaires, tests, projections, or other techniques or any apparatus, whether of South African origin or imported, for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make - up, personality functioning psycho physiological functioning or psychopathology
- the exercising of control over prescribed psychological questionnaires or tests or prescribed techniques, apparatus or instruments for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make - up, personality functioning, psycho physiological functioning or psychopathology;
- the development of and control over the development of psychological questionnaires, tests, techniques, apparatus or instruments for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make -up, personality functioning, psycho physiological functioning or psychopathology;
- the use of any psychological questionnaire, test, prescribed techniques, instrument, apparatus, device or similar method for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make - up, personality functioning, temperament, psycho physiological functioning, psycho-pathology or personnel career selection, and for this purpose the board will publish a Board Notice listing the tests which are classified by the Board for use by registered psychologists;

Social Worker:

The welfare sector consists of a core cadre of social service professionals including social workers, social auxiliary workers, child and youth care workers, community development practitioners, youth workers and probation officers.

Social workers complete a 4 year social work degree that equips social workers with:

- skills to challenge structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion
- knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and social systems and the skills to intervene at the points where people interact with their environments in order to promote social well-being
- the ability and competence to assist and empower individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities to enhance their social functioning and their problem - solving capacities
- the ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities by enabling them to accomplish tasks, prevent and alleviate distress and use resources effectively
- an understanding of and the ability to demonstrate social work values and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting the range of human diversity

- the understanding and ability to provide social work services towards protecting people who are vulnerable, at -risk and unable to protect themselves
- knowledge and understanding of both the South African and the global welfare context and the ability to implement the social development approach in social work services
- understanding of the major social needs, issues, policies and legislation in the South African social welfare context and the social workers' role and contribution
- the skill to work effectively within teams, including social work teams, multi- and inter-disciplinary teams as well as multi-sectoral teams

Kindly refer to the below attached job description of a registered counselor as per the Department of Health which further is indicative of the recognition of registered counselors as part of the psychology division as well as the distinction between registered counselors and social workers. Kindly also refer to the attached scope of practice of a registered counselor and social worker.

I would thus like to bring your attention to the abovementioned differences between registered counselors and social workers. On behalf of the PsySSa Registered Counselors and Psychometrists Executive Committee, I would like to humbly request your urgent attention to the matter at hand.

Thank you for your assistance in this regard

PsySSa Registered Counselors and Psychometrists Executive Committee