



SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS

STATEMENT ON THE 70TH MEETING OF COUNCIL

REF: 1/27

21 June 2024

STATEMENT OF THE 70TH MEETING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS (SACSSP)

The South African Council for Social Professions (SACSSP) held its 70th meeting, the first meeting in the new year, on 23 and 24 April 2024 and the meeting focused on the core business of Council during the fourth quarter, the status of resolutions and progress made.

REGISTRATION OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Council was pleased with the total of 2,397 persons registered through the new online registration system, although it expressed concern that 522 applications were rejected due to incomplete documentation submitted.

Council was briefed about the ongoing challenges with the online registration system which are regretted and noted that the Secretariat is currently implementing manual capturing of applications as to mitigate these challenges.

Council noted the 104 verifications on the status of registration with the SACSSP from Social Work England, CORU Regulating Health and Social Care Professionals, Social Workers Registration Board New Zealand, Social Care Wales, Albertina College of Social Workers and British Colombia College of Social Workers were concluded, while one qualification obtained outside the country was assessed for the purpose of registration in terms of section 17D of Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 and 285 status of registration reports were issued by the Secretariat.

Council welcomed the success of the registration outreach that took place at various higher education institutions and the Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Northern Cape Departments of Social Development in all nine provinces and reaching students and practitioners.

Council appreciated that a total of 111 applications for exemption from paying annual fees from unemployed social service professionals in terms of regulation 3(b) of the *Regulations relating to the fees payable by social workers, child and youth care workers, social auxiliary workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers, student social workers and student child and youth care workers* were received and that 103 applicants qualified and were exempted from the payment of annual fees for the 2024/2025 financial year. The other eight applications are pending further investigation. The utilisation of this measure by registrants instituted by the SACSSP to support unemployed social service professionals is well utilised and all applicants were informed on the outcome of their applications.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Council welcomed the report on the capacity development on Code of Ethics in various provinces where 985 registrants were reached.

Council noted the report on the 59 complaints of unprofessional or improper conduct that were received during the reporting period. The Committee of Preliminary Inquiry (CPI) investigated 22 complaints, of which two complaints were referred for further inquiry in terms of regulation 8 of the *Regulations regarding the conducting of enquiries into alleged unprofessional conduct*, while 10 matters were closed as the respondents were found not to be in contravention of the *Rules relating to the acts or omissions of a social worker, a social auxiliary worker or a student social worker which shall constitute unprofessional or improper conduct*, one matter is still under investigation, two regulation 7(2) matters were finalised and 2 matters were referred as per regulation 7(5) to Professional Conduct Committee for a disciplinary inquiry.

Council noted the report of the *CPI Appeals Committee* which heard 5 appeals lodged against the findings of the Committee of Preliminary Inquiry. The Appeals Committee, after careful consideration of all records and documentary evidence related to these disputes, found that there was no evidence that would have resulted in a different finding than the finding of the Committee of Preliminary Inquiry, and upheld the findings of the Committee of Preliminary Inquiry five cases reviewed.

Council was informed of the outcomes of the 3 disciplinary inquiries held by the Professional Conduct Committee. It was noted that in the first matter a social worker was found guilty of unprofessional /improper conduct and a penalty of a R5,000 in terms of section 22(1)(b) was imposed; the second matter involving a social worker is part-head and that the Professional Conduct Committee will reconvene to finalise the finding; and for the third matter the disciplinary inquiry is still in progress.

Council further noted 2 appeals were lodged against the penalties imposed by the Professional Conduct Committee in terms of section 25(1)(b) of the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 which were referred to the Minister of Social Development's Appeals Committee. In the one matter that Appeals Committee confirmed the finding and penalty imposed by the Professional Conduct Committee, i.e., the suspension of the social worker for a period of three years. In the second appeal the Appeals Committee found that the respondent was not guilty of unprofessional or improper conduct and set aside the finding and the penalty (removal from the Register) imposed by the Professional Conduct Committee. The Appeals Committee is endowed as per section 25(5) of the Act, following an appeal hearing, to either confirm or set aside a penalty and give such judgment as it deems necessary.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Council approved the Professional Board for Social Work's Ecometrics Technology Policy, inclusive of guidelines, forms and standing operating procedures for immediate implementation.

Council noted that 173 continuing professional development (CPD) applications received for social work of which 133 were assessed resulting in 103 being approved, while seven were not approved due to the application not being in line with the scope of practice for social work and social auxiliary work. A further four applications were suspended pending sufficient information or clarity required by the assessment panel. For child and youth care work, 5 CPD applications were received and all of them were approved

Council was informed that 6 Portfolios of Evidence (POE's) were received and all of them were assessed. These POE's were received from persons who applied to register as auxiliary child and youth care workers in terms of section 18A of the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978, and are used for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in the registration as per the Regulations

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Council noted the challenges with bulk email communication to registrants and the feedback on this on the SACSSP social media platforms. The Secretariat is attending to a turnaround plan to mitigate these challenges.

RISK AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Council approved the appointment of new external members to serve on the Risk and Audit Committee, i.e., Ms Suran Maharaj and Mr Nchoke Raphele following the resignation of two members of this Committee.

CONGRATULATIONS

Council announced and extended its congratulations and well wishes to Mr Hitler Sekhitla, with his appointment as the 5th Registrar of the SACSSP for a period of five years starting from 1 May 2024. Council also congratulated the SACSSP President Prof. Paul Mbedzi for his promotion to Professor by the University of South Africa.

ISSUED BY: SACSSP Communications

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ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR SERVICE PROFESSIONS

The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) is an autonomous statutory body established in terms of section 2 of the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 ("the Act"). The SACSSP discharges its mandate, subject to the provisions of the Act together with the Regulations and Rules thereto, as the determining, guiding and directing authority body for the social service professions of social work and child and youth care work in the country. The SACSSP fulfils this role through Council constituted in terms of section 5 of the Act and the Professional Board for Social Work and the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Work established in terms of section 14A of the Act and constituted in terms of the applicable Regulations, by setting the standards for education and training of social service professionals (qualifications and continuous professional development); registration of social service professionals as a requirement to practice; setting standards for and exercise effective control over the professional conduct (including ethics) of social service professionals as well as by taking policy resolutions as guidelines for the practising of the social service professions under its auspices. Thus, protecting the integrity of the social service professions as well as the interest of the public at large. It is a legal requirement in terms of the Act for a social worker, social auxiliary worker, student social worker, student social auxiliary worker, child and youth care worker, auxiliary child and youth care worker, student child and youth care worker and student auxiliary child and youth care worker to be registered and in good standing in terms of his or her registration as condition to practise.