

Update: Northern Cape DSD Substance Abuse and Treatment Centre

The PSA is concerned about the safety of members at the Department of Social Development in the Northern Cape. The Union requested the Department to investigate some serious concerns regarding the Substance Abuse and Treatment Centre outside Kimberley. The following issues were brought to the attention of the employer:

Deviation from Admission Criteria Policy (*Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act, 2008*)

- Admission of high-risk clients
- Clients with special needs requiring specialised care
- Clients with transmittable diseases (e.g., TB) with a history of defaulting treatment
- Increased risk of transmission to employees and other clients.

The PSA is of the view that the Centre is admitting patients and ignoring specific criteria as listed above. This needs to be curbed as it could pose a serious threat to the safety and well-being of members.

Non-compliance with *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS Act, 1993)*, section 8 (General duties of employers)

- The Treatment Centre is facing significant OHS challenges, compromising the well-being of employees and clients
- Broken infrastructure and inadequate facilities
- Broken toilets and showers in wards
- Admission of high-risk clients
- Clients with special needs requiring specialised care
- Clients with transmittable diseases (e.g., TB) with a history of defaulting treatment
- Increased risk of transmission to employees and other clients

Insufficient cleaning materials and sanitation

- Inadequate cleaning supplies owing to budget constraints
- Inability to maintain clean and sanitised environments
- Risk of infection transmission and unsanitary conditions

Consequences and risks

- Employee exposure to health risks (infections, injuries)
- Client exposure to health risks (infections, accidents)
- Compromised care quality
- Potential legal liabilities

Unregistered staff, which include PSA members (SACSSP)

- As a result of alleged non-payment of training providers since 2021 to 2022, thus contravening South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) regulations.
- The issue of unregistered staff at the Treatment Centre is a serious concern, especially since it has been ongoing from 2020 to 2021. The problem started when the Department sent care workers for training, but original certificates were never received. This is a major hurdle because the SACSSP requires these certificates to register the care workers.
- As a result, the Treatment Centre is now dealing with a list of unregistered staff. Some are even in the process of being deregistered. This puts the employees at a disadvantage and places the Centre at risk of operating illegally. The conundrum means the employees are unable to practice legally, and the Centre is vulnerable to potential legal repercussions.

Key issues

- Unpaid training providers: The training providers have not been paid from 2020 to 2021.
- SACSSP registration requirements: SACSSP needs original certificates to register care workers - without these the employees cannot be registered.
- Risk of illegal operation: The Treatment Centre is at risk of operating illegally owing to the high number of unregistered staff.

Potential consequences

- Legal repercussions: The Treatment Centre could face legal action owing to non-compliance with SACSSP regulations.
- Loss of accreditation: The Centre's accreditation could be revoked, further compromising its ability to operate.
- Negative impact on workers: Unregistered workers may struggle to find employment or advance in their careers.

Members will be informed of developments.

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GENERAL MANAGER