

September 28, 2012

Mr. David Harrigan  
700-11150 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton Alberta T5K 0C7

Re: Mental Health Therapists

Dear Mr. Harrigan,

Thank you for meeting with us on September 14, 2012 to discuss the issue of Mental Health Therapists. I appreciate you taking the time to raise concerns, and the dialogue that we were able to have.

As discussed, the role of a Mental Health Therapist can be performed by several regulated disciplines under the Health Professions Act. As such, the position of the Alberta Labour Board and AHS is that this functional role belongs in the paramedical professional and technical bargaining unit represented by HSAA.

Position descriptions and the make-up of our clinical teams will always be determined by the needs of our clients. Our community-based model of clinical case management, utilizing Mental Health Therapists, is evidence-based and recognized as a best practice. In some instances, as determined by the needs of our clients, we may choose to employ discipline-specific roles such as Psychologists, Social Workers, Registered Nurses/Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Occupational Therapists, working to their own full scopes of professional practice. Whether to employ Mental Health Therapists or discipline-specific positions will always be determined by the needs of our clients within our model of care.

No current incumbents in any Collective Agreement will be impacted immediately or without a review of the actual function of the position. All position descriptions for new or vacated positions are being submitted for job evaluation assessment to determine if the required duties reflect a direct Nursing role or Paramedical Technical and Professional role. This process ensures that positions are posted in compliance with the most appropriate Collective Agreement.

Vacancies for nursing positions will continue to be posted and filled through competition in accordance with the AHS/UNA Collective Agreement. Any Nursing position that is posted and filled will be compensated with the existing RN/RPN salary scale per the UNA Collective Agreement.

Mental Health Therapist, Social Worker, Psychologist and Occupational Therapist vacancies will be posted and filled in accordance with the AHS/HSAA Collective Agreement.

Should a current UNA RN/RPN apply for, and be successful on a Mental Health Therapist competition, it will be under the HSAA terms and conditions of employment. Our postings will clearly identify the applicable bargaining unit, classification, salary scale, and other information required by the applicable Collective Agreement.

I would like to clarify that there was no intent to “obviously, consciously exclude UNA” from discussions on the topic and I apologize if this was the perception that was given. HSAA is the bargaining agent for the Mental Health Therapist classification. In accordance with the Collective Agreement with HSAA, the discussion with HSAA was to notify them of the implementation of a single pay grade for all Mental Health Therapists, as there was disparity within our current zones and former entities.

During our discussions, we committed to clarifying the language in the memo to employees dated July 9, 2012 that stated "...all MHT positions that are new or become vacant will be posted under the classification of 'Mental Health Therapist' under HSAA." Clarification will be given that all vacant or new functions will first be reviewed by Job Evaluation, and subsequently posted accordingly. This will ensure that the position responsibilities are accurately reflected by the most appropriate classification.

I trust that through our face-to-face discussion and this letter, I am responding to all your concerns. Thank-you again for meeting with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Snaterse". The signature is stylized with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal stroke.

Mark Snaterse