

Annual Report of the South African Society for Mental Health and Deafness

1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

1. Introduction

The South African Society for Mental Health and Deafness (SASMHD) was established on 12 March 2003 with the support of the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness on the campus of the National Institute for the Deaf in Worcester.

The SASMHD is a specialist organisation of volunteers run by volunteers in order to keep overheads low and efficiency high for the maximum benefit of its members and beneficiaries.

2. Office Bearers

Chairperson: Dr. FBN Sokudela

Vice-Chairperson: Prof. PH de Wet

Secretary: Rev. AL Smit

Treasurer: Mr. EW Kleinschmit

Additional member: Ms. EN Ramokhele

Since the last election of office bearers in 2007 the chairperson, Dr. F. Pretorius, who emigrated to Canada, resigned. Mrs. JSH Visser resigned as treasurer. The vacancies were filled in terms of Article 9.8 of the Constitution of SASMHD. Dr. FBN Sokudela (vice-chairperson) was appointed as chairperson and Prof. PH de Wet (additional member) was appointed as vice-chairperson. Mr. EW Kleinschmidt (additional member) was appointed as treasurer.

3. Membership

On 31 March 2016 the SASMHD had 42 paid-up individual members and 3 group members (organisations).

4. Vision and Mission

Vision: The mental health and wellbeing of Deaf persons and their families.

Mission: To advocate and promote equal, accessible and appropriate mental health services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels for Deaf persons and their families based on sound research and good practice.

5. Major Activities

Activities	Benefits for beneficiaries
1. A brochure on Mental Health and Deafness was produced, published on the website and distributed	Mental health professionals and mental health workers were sensitised to the deaf specific mental health needs and risks of misdiagnosis and misunderstanding regarding the use of medication.
2. Publishing of local and international research results and scientific presentations on the website.	Mental health professionals and mental health workers were kept informed of the newest development in the field of mental health and deafness.
3. Building and maintaining a network of local and international experts and organisations.	Exchange of knowledge and skills were promoted on local and international level.
4. Special efforts were launched to expand and diversify membership.	Practitioners as well as users of mental health services developed more interest to join in membership. More awareness was developed for shortcomings regarding accessibility and appropriateness of services.
5. Establishment of a Scientific Committee for the gathering and dissemination of knowledge.	A trusted source of knowledge in the field of mental health and deafness was ensured for mental health service providers, for Deaf persons who need to access mental health services and their families.
6. A Scientific Conference was held at the Weskoppies Hospital in Pretoria.	The 69 participants: students, mental health workers and mental health professionals shared and exchanged knowledge and experience and gained more insight and awareness of the deaf specific considerations when serving Deaf persons who need to access mental health services. Presentations were published on the website for access by all beneficiaries in South Africa and internationally.
7. Identifying and utilising opportunities to promote understanding and addressing the mental health needs of Deaf people and their families in the public and private health sectors of society	The chairperson, who is a psychiatrist, was nominated to serve on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Mental Health. Should she be appointed, it will bring new knowledge to the committee that will promote accessible and equal mental health services to Deaf persons and their families.
8. Addressing the issue of communication barriers when Deaf persons need to access mental health services.	Mental health service providers gained more awareness of the impact of the harm communication barriers cause and how to overcome it. Deaf patients experienced that an increasing number of mental health service providers have awareness and skills to communicate with them and reduce misunderstanding.
9. Maximising the website as communication and empowerment tool.	Reports from the webmaster indicated that visits to the website and downloading of material, locally and internationally, increased to levels not previously achieved.

6. Meetings of the Management Committee/Executive Committee

Four meetings were held on:

26 March 2014 - was done by telephone conference in terms of Article 10.3 of the constitution

25 March 2015 - was a physical meeting by the chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary, the other two members participated through e-mail, telephone and individual meetings.

15 May 2015 - was an e-mail meeting.

05 August 2015 - was a physical meeting.

20 April 2016 – was an e-mail meeting.

04 July 2016 – was an e-mail meeting.

7. Amendments to Constitution

At the Management's Committee meeting on 25 March 2015, the need was identified to amend the constitution to make the management of SASMHD more cost and time efficient. It was clear to the committee that some of the articles had to be reformulated and that the structure and content of the constitution needed to be reviewed to give clear direction to the organisation to fulfil the purpose for which it was founded. The secretary was task to draft a revised constitution with the help of a lawyer with expertise in NPO constitutions.

At its meeting on 5 August 2015 the purposed revisions was approved after inputs by all committee members via e-mail and telephonic exchange of options. The revised constitution was published on the website for comments by members.

The proposed changes can be summarised as follow:

- 7.1. "Executive Committee" replaces "Governing Body" and "Management Committee" in order to reduce meetings and improve time and cost efficiency.
- 7.2. "Biennial Meeting of Members" replaces the "Quadrennial Meeting", which helps to keep members more involved and improve interaction because of shorter intervals between membership meetings.
- 7.3. The vision and mission were rephrased for more clarity and direction.
- 7.4. The membership article was rephrased to make it more open and easier to apply.
- 7.5. The structure was streamlined to improve time and cost efficiency.
- 7.6. The powers and duties of the executive committee were described in more detail in order to give clear guidance and to comply with principles of transparency.
- 7.7. Provisions regarding membership, vacancies and matters not provided for in the constitution were included.
- 7.8. The amended constitution's provisions empower the executive committee to be innovative and at the same time accountable to the members and the registration authority.
- 7.9. No provision was made for representatives of other relevant national organisations on the Executive Committee. The committee is of the opinion that closer cooperation with such organisations will be more effective via partnership agreements, affiliation and group membership.

8. Application for Registration as NPO

Application for registration as non-profit organisation was done on 25 November 2015. On 12 January 2016 the SASMHD was registered as Non-Profit-Organisation number 164-239 NPO.

9. Audits 2015 and 2016

The auditing of the books of the organisation was done and submitted to the Management Committee. The reports were approved by the Committee. The audited reports is available at the secretary.

10. Major events during 2016

10.1. The registration process as NPO was completed on 12 January 2016.

10.2. The secretary and members of SASMHD attent and participated in the Africa Workshop on Mental Health and Deafness from 26- 30 September 2016.

10.3. Membership gradually increased to 42 nationally and internationally.

10.4. More attention was given to marketing. As more professionals in the field of mental health became aware of the unique mental needs of Deaf who need to access mental health services interest to gain more knowledge was growing. The expectation is that the involvement of professionals will grow during tha next year.

10.5. The SASMHD's databases grew substantially .

11. Conclusion

The Management Committee would like to thank individual and group members as well donors for their loyal support that made it possible for the SASMHD to continue with its task in South Africa.

The SASMHD is currently the only specialist organisation in South Africa with its main focus on the mental health of Deaf persons and their families.



Dr. FBN Funeka
Chairperson



Rev. AL Smit
Secretary

31 March 2016