

Press Conference on Employment Terms of Clinical Psychologists

Hong Kong Clinical Psychologists Association (HKCPA), Government Employees Association and Rights and Benefits Committee of The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU) would like to express our concern over the recent pay adjustment presented by the government. The revised pay structure is unjust to clinical psychologists with work experience, and fails to pursue the objectives of government pay policy of retaining and motivating existing staff. **HKCPA strongly urges the government to give recognition to work experience and provide incremental credits in the pay adjustment.**

Since July 2007, the starting pay for government clinical psychologists has been increased from point 22 (\$27,765) to point 27 (\$34,895) on the Master Pay Scale. Under the revised pay structure, the salary of existing clinical psychologists on civil servant terms who entered the government after April 2000 is adjusted to point 27, without any recognition of years of work experience (those who have already reached point 27 will be added one increment). The starting pay for newly recruited clinical psychologists is standardized at point 27, again without recognition of work experience. Similarly, the salary of clinical psychologists in Hospital Authority is adjusted to point 25. **This revised pay structure definitely creates an unfair and unreasonable employment condition to the existing staff** (Appendix 1).

Clinical psychologists often face many challenges and difficulties in their day-to-day practice, such as providing psychotherapy to clients with psychotic or mood disorders, conducting psychological assessment with offenders, handling high-risk cases of child abuse and family violence, and providing education and training to other professionals or general public. All these work require an accumulation of work experience to attain a better case management and provision of service. However, the government and the Hospital Authority fail to recognize the significance of work experience and do not provide incremental credits in the pay adjustment, **resulting in an outflow of clinical psychologists from public to private sector. The unfavorable employment terms also fail to attract experienced candidates to join the public sector** (Appendix 2).

Statistics from governmental departments and Hospital Authority indicate that the public demand for clinical psychology service has been increasing at a rate much faster than the increase of manpower (Appendix 3). The rapid rise of public demand undoubtedly increases the workload and work stress of clinical psychologists. The higher work pressure, together with the unfair pay structure, are exacerbating the outflow of people from public to private sector. In Hong Kong, the fees for psychological services are tremendously different in private and public settings, and the government and Hospital Authority have been all along providing affordable or even free but high quality service to the public. Therefore, **the instability of workforce resulted from the**

unfair pay adjustment not only leads to management difficulty, but also has adverse impact over psychological service to the public.

HKCPA had recently conducted a survey over job satisfaction and work morale among our members who are employed after 2000. 96% of the respondents reported that their job satisfaction and work morale are affected by the recent unfair pay adjustment. While over 90% of the respondents said that they would consider changing job if their years of work experience are being recognized in other sectors, 13% had already changed their jobs in the recent months. These results clearly indicated that **the unfair pay structure has significantly affected the job satisfaction and work morale among clinical psychologists, and creating an instability of workforce in the government.**

With reasons stated above, HKCPA strongly urges the government and the Hospital Authority to review the pay structure and give recognition to work experience so that:

- (1) all existing clinical psychologists who joined the government or the Hospital Authority after April 2000 should be given incremental credits in the pay adjustment.**
- (2) the starting pay for the newly recruits will be set with reference to the years of work experience.**

For any enquiries, please contact Mr. Ip Wai Ming of HKFTU (Tel: 7339 5225) or HKCPA (Tel: 9688 8615)

**Hong Kong Clinical Psychologists Association (HKCPA)
Government Employees Association, Rights and Benefits Committee
The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU)**

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APPENDIX 1

Salary of clinical psychologists in public settings:

		Starting Pay (Master Pay Scale)	Remarks
Government Departments	Before April 2000	Point 27	Provide incremental credits with reference to years of work experience
	After April 2000	Point 22	The provision of incremental credits is decided by individual departments
	Since July 2007	Point 27	No provision of incremental credits
Hospital Authority	After April 2000	Point 22	The provision of incremental credits is decided by individual hospitals
	Since July 2007	Point 25	No provision of incremental credits
Non- Government Organizations (NGOs)	--	--	The level of salary is decided by individual organizations. But most set the salary with reference to government pay scale

- Since July 2007, the starting pay for government clinical psychologists is increased from point 22 (\$27765) to point 27 (\$34895) on the Master Pay Scale.
- Under the revised pay structure, the salary of existing clinical psychologists on civil servant terms who entered the government after April 2000 is adjusted to point 27, without any recognition of years of work experience (those who have already reached point 27 will be added one increment).
- The starting pay for newly recruits since July 2007 is standardized at point 27, without any recognition of years of work experience
- Clinical psychologists employed on contract terms are not benefited from the revised pay structure, and remain same salary with the entry point of 22.
- The salary of clinical psychologists in Hospital Authority who entered the setting after April 2000 is adjusted to point 25 (with monthly allowance).
- Examples of unfair employment conditions under the revised pay structure:
 - (1) An existing clinical psychologist with 5 years of work experience will get a same salary as a newly recruit without any work experience.
 - (2) A newly recruited clinical psychologist with no prior relevant experience will get a higher salary than an existing contract clinical psychologist with work experience.
 - (3) If an existing contract clinical psychologist who has more than five years of work experience applies the civil servant post, there will be a deduction in the salary.

APPENDIX 2

Salary comparison between clinical psychologists in private and public sectors:

Government clinical psychologists on <u>civil servant</u> terms:	MPS point 27 (\$34895)
Government clinical psychologists on <u>contract</u> terms:	MPS point 22 (\$27765)
Clinical psychologists in Hospital Authority:	MPS point 25 (+ monthly allowance)
Clinical psychologists in private settings:	Monthly income: \$50000 - 80000

APPENDIX 3

Comparison between increases of caseload and manpower in public settings:

Social Welfare Department

	2005	2007 (Jan – June)	% Change
Newly registered child abuse cases	763	448	+17% (Estimated change based on figures of first half year of 2007)
Newly registered battered spouse cases	3598	2733	+52% (Estimated change based on figures of first half year of 2007)
Newly registered elderly abuse cases	528	284	+8% (Estimated change based on figures of first half year of 2007)
No. of clinical psychologists	50	50	0%

Hospital Authority

	1998	2006	% Change
In-patient new cases	4856	7879	+62.2%
Out-patient new cases	5607	8103	+44.5%
No. of clinical psychologists	54	69	+27.7%

Rate of resignation for clinical psychologists in public settings:

1. Department of Health: 47% of clinical psychologists employed after 2000 had resigned in 2006 and 2007.
2. Social Welfare Department: 14% of clinical psychologists employed after 2000 had resigned in the recent half year.