

From: The employees of the Mental Health Foundation
Leopard Road # 1
Cay Hill, Sint Maarten
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To: the president of the board of the Mental Health Foundation
Leopard Road #1
Cay Hill, Sint Maarten

June 1st, 2020

Subject: Termination of trust in the interim director and management team of the Mental Health Foundation.

Dear Dr. Felix Holiday,

This letter has been composed to inform you about reasons for termination of trust in the interim-director Ms. Eileen Healy, intended director and current medical coordinator Ms. Kitty Pelswijk and HR officer Mrs. Carina Ellis-Romney, by employees, due to structural long-lasting mistreatment and abuse of power against employees of the MHF, in which we cannot speak anymore of good employer ship by the directors of MHF and the HR officer.

History of Leadership Issues

There has been bad records pertaining to high staff turnover before Ms. E. Healy retired in 2014. Ms. Healy got a new position as an advisor to the new director Mr. P. Lucas but was relieved from her function in less than 3 months. In 2017, an announcement was made to staff of the intention to appoint Ms. E. Healy as the director or project coordinator. The staff were aware of the need for a director, as MHF relieved Mr. P. Lucas of this position and has been without a director for a couple of months. The previous union, United Federation of Windward Island Antilles(UFA) responded by sending a letter to the Board of MHF strongly advising to reconsider putting Ms. E. Healy in any leadership position. In addition, a meeting was held with Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labour (VSA) on this concern. Nevertheless, Ms. E. Healy has been hired on September 1, 2017, with one of her task being recruiting a new director. It is June 2020 and therefore, concluded there has been no real efforts and success in getting a director. Ms. E. Healy claimed there are no good candidates and applicants are asking for a high salary. This seemed to be an excuse to keep leadership position for 3 years. For instance, there have been increase in recruitments between 2017 and 2020; there are now 4 psychologists, 3 psychiatrists, 2 clinic nurses, 4 case managers, 1 Information and Prevention coordinator, 2 social workers and 1 occupational therapist.

Culture of fear

For a long period, the former and current interim director of the MHF created a culture of fear amongst employees, systematically and continuously mistreating and abusing power towards selective employees, who want to remain anonymous due to fear of severe repercussion and incomplete transition to our new union ABVO. There is no one to speak out for staff, everyone in management (Ms. L. Jones, finance manager, human resources manager, medical coordinator/psychiatrist and interim director) are committed to Interim director. Ms. E. Healy made it clear and sent a memo informing staff, she has the last say in all decisions. Furthermore, we are experiencing the mistreatment from the intended director, Dr. Kitty Pelkwijk (it is announced she will be the replacement in less than a month moving from Suriname to work at MHF as a psychiatrist). Also, Mrs. Carina Ellis, human resources manager, wilfully adds unrest to the work environment by encouraging the ill treatment of majority of the staff. Below are examples of unpleasant situation at MHF:

Use of Cameras' Footage and Tracking GPS

Cameras are installed around the building with audio and GPS on company cars. The records are retrieved and used to reprimand staff based on management's conclusion, without staff seeing the actual records or discussing beforehand with coordinator. As a result, the content of warning letters is frequently not an actual description of the situation and is based on one-sided false information by the directors of MHF. Furthermore, there should be an explanation on why the above is not use for all 30 plus employees. Why is management spying on employees who were not under the suspicion of illegal or criminal behaviour by law? Security cameras and car tracking devices are not installed for these purposes, but for safety and data collection reasons. No policy for cameras with audio was handed or explained to staff, clients and MHF's neighbour (who voice could be pick up by audio). In addition, staffs were informed of audio after cameras were installed in and outside the building. The use of security camera footage and car GPS data by Ms. Healy is not only contributing to the culture of fear, but is also a severe breach of the individual privacy and illegal by law (Algemene verordening persoonsgegevens; EU-AVG).

Quality of care

The interim director does not recognize and take responsibility for the problems regarding the quality of care pronounced by different caregivers of MHF. Instead, Ms. E. Healy criticizes caregivers' feedback. Moreover, Ms. Healy is systematically excluding certain experienced and highly educated healthcare workers from participating in process of decision-making on medical content affecting clients' care. This top-down decision-making brings MHF healthcare workers in conflict with loyalty of giving good care to our clients. Staff will face repercussions of the MHF interim directors for not following rules that may violate quality care to clients. The director is overly involved in certain planning but her role is indirect care, so she does not give treatments, do mentorship, evaluate care plans and do not know clients' interest.

Secondly, in March 2020 the transition to a new electronic client dossier has a negative impact on quality of care. There was little training that always included new changes in the system (as MHF is the first to use this system). In addition, medical information, including diagnosis and use of medication, were no longer available, which gives immediate and severe risks for the safety of the

clients. These problems were anticipated and mentioned to Ms. Healy, who did not take adequate measures to guarantee the safety of clients, critical data. This is unacceptable in an institution that is giving care to clients.

Nevertheless, Ms. Healy has the audacity to send an email blaming staff for low production and praise her effort for paying staff salary during COVID-19. The director is aware that all clients' data have not been transferred to the new clients' system. Also due to limited space, the clinic is booking appointments based on 3 available rooms.

Unworkable situation

The above mentioned problems are only a small part of the presented problems at MHF. The current situation is affecting health of certain caregivers which has a negative effect on the quality of care of the clients. Ms. E Healy is creating tension at the work place, involving herself in department's situation (imposing to do things her way). The rules and regulation of the organization has not been updated since 2014, but staffs have to adhere to a lot of changes. In addition, management often references to policies that do not exist or have not been updated in years to argue their case against workers. There is also hiring of staff, whose function is not clear and relevant at the moment. In conclusion, we cannot speak of good employer ship by law (Burgerlijk Wetboek; article 7:611) anymore and this has led to an unworkable situation for the caregivers of the MHF. Therefore the caregivers of the MHF are terminating the trust in the directors and the HR officer of the MHF.

It is regretful that it has come to this point and that the caregivers of the MHF feel the necessity to inform the board of directors, the Minister of VSA and the Inspector General Earl Best, about the deteriorating situation. It is expected that the board of directors will start with the process of taking adequate measures that will resolve the problem within the next two weeks after receipt of this letter. All affected caregivers will be open for discussion with strict confidentiality of mentioning names. We expect that the board of directors of the MHF will protect the care givers against repercussions taken by Ms. Healy and Mrs. Carina due to sending this letter.

Equal and fair treatment

The director is known for sending or saying insulting things(e.g. I am the boss no one should go to the board, I do not care about your emotions, I am paying your salary, you went to school but cannot speak/write English properly, I will get a lawyer and get rid of you, if labour department does not agreed). A small group can get away with wrong doings, while those that are executing their job in honesty, fairness with passion and dedication are penalized and embarrassed in front other staff. A health care institution should not be "functioning" on favouritism of being friends or family. It should be functioning on dedicated professionals.

Solutions

We are proposing the following solutions:

1. Board of MHF evaluates the management team (medical coordinator/psychiatrist, finance manager and HR). Evaluate their performance, staff relationship and assertiveness in making decisions that differs from Ms. Healy.

2. Appoint Mr. Jimmy Challenger or another psychiatrist (not influenced by Ms. Elieen) to be the interim director temporary. They have proven to be emphatic, neutral and being capable and qualified to fill position temporary.
3. Do not appoint Dr. Kelpwijk director, start recruitment of a new director (should function independently and without fear that Ms. Healy nor Mrs. Carina can unfairly influence continuation of employment).
4. Provide training in human resources management to Mrs. Carina and evaluate after 3 months. Mrs. Carina should be reprimanded when she manipulates staff in signing documents. It should be clear she will not get away with being using the law only when it is convenient for management and not with staff.

In closing

In 2017 a letter was already sent to the board of the MHF and the then minister of VSA, find this letter attached. Clearly staffs are still suffering and the situation is deteriorating. We hope that this time we will be taken serious. We hope that you as board will not allow this structural problem to continue.

Hoping to have informed you accordingly.

Awaiting a prompt reply, within 2 weeks

We appreciate a response to all staffs' email; job email addresses can be retrieved from Executive Assistant at MHF.

Kind Regards,
Concern MHF Staff

Cc: the Honorable Minister of VSA, Richard Panneflek

Cc: Inspector General, Earl Best

To: Mental Health Foundation
The Board and management team
Ms. Tess Blom
Leopard Road #1
Cay Hill, St. Maarten

Attention: MHF Leadership

Philipsburg, August 21, 2017

Dear Ms. T. Blom,

Although the MHF Board received a carbon copy of the letter send (email 7/7/2017) to the Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor, Mr. E. Lee and a copy of the letter was presented to the MHF staff on the bulletin board at the MHF, the UFA never received an official written reaction from the MHF to the letter in question, which we regret.

Nevertheless several UFA members reported that actions were taken by the MHF on some of the issues addressed in the abovementioned letter. Although the UFA welcomes the fact that actions are being taken and decisions were made to tackle some urgent issues, the UFA is not satisfied with the way in which they were shaped.

Concerning the issue of the President of the MHF it's reported that it has been communicated to the staff that the President will make his position available once a replacement has been found. The UFA is of the opinion that this is unacceptable for an organization in a situation as mentioned before, because the recruitment- and appointment process for this position could take several months, therefore the UFA suggests that the President of the Board has to resign immediately and make his position temporarily available to one of the other board members while the Board will look for an replacement of the President.

The other issue on leadership is the one reported on the intention or decision by the MHF to appoint Ms. E. Healy, a former MHF director, as the new director or interim director or project coordinator as from the 1st of September 2017.

The UFA is shocked that this option was even considered and communicated as a solution to the situation the MHF is in pertaining to the leadership of the organization. One of the biggest challenges the MHF is facing at the moment due to the lack of leadership and direction is the staff turnover. The UFA mentioned the staff turnover as

being worrisome in the letter to the Minister and since that letter was send a couple of employees left the MHF because they weren't satisfied with the current situation at the MHF.

It has been reported that Ms. E. Healy who is a former director of the MHF had a bad record pertaining to the staff turnover, mostly due to her lack of decent and effective communications- and leadership skills towards staff.

The UFA is of the opinion and strongly advises the MHF to reconsider the intention or decision to install Ms. E. Healy in whatever leading position at the MHF. The UFA is not convinced that having Ms. E. Healy in any such position will do staff or the MHF any good and her presence will ultimately jeopardize the operation of the organization.

In the meeting of Wednesday July 26th 2017 with the Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor the UFA made her position clear in respect to the issues mentioned above. The UFA also mentioned that she would send a letter to the MHF addressing these issues, the Minister explicitly requested to receive a carbon copy of the letter.

We are therefore, in the interest of the staff and clients of the MHF, requesting an urgent meeting with you to discuss these matters at your earliest, but no later than Monday August 28th, 2017.

Hoping to have informed you accordingly,
Awaiting a prompt response,

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lloyd Beaton', written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Lloyd Beaton,
President of the UFA.
o.b.o. The staff of the Mental Health Foundation

cc: The Honorable Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor.