

Statement of the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) on the Proposed Guidelines in the Conduct of Psychological Examinations for Overseas Work Applicants Pursuant to Administrative Order No. 2010-0022

Posted January 17, 2011 by papnews

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Code of Ethics, DOH, PAP, psychological tests

We, the Board of Directors of the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP),* would like to commend the efforts of the Department of Health – Bureau of Health Facilities and Services (DOH-BHFS) “to provide quality, effective and efficient psychological screening services to overseas work applicants,” thus making this “one of the basic minimum requirements for accreditation of medical facilities for overseas workers and seafarers” (30 November 2010 Draft of Working Document for the TWG). In the spirit of professional partnership, we would like to share our expertise in the area of psychological assessment to help meet the objective of delivery of quality psychological services to applicants. With this end in mind, we would like to clarify the standards regarding the use of psychological tests as articulated in the PAP’s Code of Ethics. Pertinent sections of the Code which we subscribe to in our practice of assessment are quoted below and are used as basis for our comments about some proposed guidelines.

Section VII.A.1. The expert opinions that we provide through our recommendation, reports, and diagnostic or evaluative statements are based on substantial information and appropriate assessment techniques.

Section VII.C.1. We judiciously select and administer only those tests which are pertinent to the reason for referral and purpose of the assessment.

We are not in agreement with the proposal to use only one objective personality test (i.e., the 16PF) to assess the applicants because this will not provide substantial information and, thus, goes against Section VII.A.1. A basic tenet of assessment is the selection of not one but several instruments to address a specific question (e.g., is the applicant fit for overseas work?). No single instrument can provide all the information needed to make an informed decision. We, therefore, recommend the use of a test battery which, at the minimum, should include two intelligence tests and two personality tests. The choice of intelligence tests (ideally, one verbal and one non-verbal) and personality tests should be based on the reason for assessment and on other variables like the position applied for, the educational attainment of the applicant, etc. (Section VII.C.1).

We are aware that Section 2.1 of the 30 November 2010 draft (Working Document for the TWG on “Formulation of Guidelines in the Conduct of Psychological Examinations for Overseas Work Applicants Pursuant to AO No. 2010-0022”) which states that “the medical clinic shall use the DOH minimum battery and, whenever applicable, additional appropriate psychological examinations which will assure the quality of psychological results” does provide for the possibility of using more than one intelligence test and more than one personality test. However, it is very likely that only the proposed minimum will

be used given the cost that additional tests will entail. What we then recommend is essentially a change in the currently proposed minimum.

Section VII.C.3. We use tests that are standardized, valid, reliable, and have normative data directly referable to the population of our clients.

Section VII.C. 1 (as explained above) with Section VII.C.3 guides our professional practice and we recommend that this be used as basis for choosing the tests. In this regard, we would be interested to know about the reliability, validity, and normative data of the 16PF, especially its Filipino version. The question is not just for the 16PF but for any other test that might be considered as part of the test battery.

The proposal to take the 16PF online is related to the issue of validity. Do we get valid results when the test is taken online? Is it the same as answering the test in the clinic? How many in the population of overseas work applicants are conversant with the use of the computer? We then recommend that the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal be evaluated.

We are also alarmed by the statistics on the volume of applicants handled everyday at the clinics. The number surely has an effect on the quality of the assessment process. How can a few psychometricians or psychologists in a clinic do a comprehensive interview of all the applicants? Given the volume that undergoes psychological screening on a daily basis, one cannot help but arrive at the sad conclusion that psychological assessment is probably not given the importance it deserves. We hope that some measures can be put in place to address this serious concern. We are therefore heartened by the directive of the DOH-BHFS to work out a reasonable ratio of psychologist/ psychometrician to applicants in the medical clinics. In addition, we suggest a review of the scheduling of applicants who need to be assessed. We believe that psychology practitioners in OFW clinics aim for quality outputs, and a manageable psychologist/psychometrician: applicant ratio will help them achieve this objective.

Principle IV of our Code of Ethics states that "as a science and a profession, psychology has responsibilities to society. These responsibilities include contributing to the knowledge about human behavior and to persons' understanding of themselves and others, and using such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society."

These responsibilities are even greater now because, while the Implementing Rules and Regulations of The Psychology Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 10029) are not yet in place, the PAP has been approved by the Professional Regulation Commission as the interim professional organization that oversees the practice of clinical and assessment psychology in the country.

We are aware of the complexity of the problems that are related to the assessment process, and we remain open to collaborative endeavors to meet the objective of DOH-BHFS to improve the delivery of psychological services to overseas work applicants.

Note:

This PAP Board position was arrived at in consultation with the PAP Public Interest Committee, the PAP Assessment Division Chair, and the five signatories of the September 20, 2010 position paper who were invited by DOH-BFHS as resource persons in drafting the guidelines for testing overseas work applicants.

PAP Board of Directors
03 December 2010