



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

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Reference 11/3/4

**TO: ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL
MEDICAL AND DENTAL COUNCIL
NURSING COUNCIL
PHARMACY COUNCIL
SOCIAL WORK & PSYCHOLOGY COUNCIL
NAMIBIAN ASSOCIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
NAMIBIAN SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND HEARING ASSOCIATION
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA
NURSES ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA
NAMIBIAN SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY**

Dear Prof./ Dr./ Mr./ Ms.

RE: REVIEW OF THE APPLICATION FORM FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Ministry is in the process of reviewing our Application Form for Special Education and would hereby like to invite your council, association and its members to review and provide inputs to the current document. *(Please find attached the Application Form for Special Education.)*

The Application Form for Special Education is a national document that serves as a medium for parents and guardians of learners with diverse needs to apply (with the potential) to be admitted into an approved special school, unit, or class in Namibia, and thereby have access to education in an environment that caters for their individual needs. The form was last reviewed in 2008 and has been used throughout the country for such purpose. It comprises of three (3) parts, namely:

Part 1, which is completed by the primary caretaker (i.e., parent and/or guardian).

Part 2, which is completed by a medical doctor or a registered nurse. If the form was completed by a registered nurse, a letter of motivation stating why a doctor could not be consulted needs to be attached.

Part 3, which is completed by the current school principal (i.e., if the learner is or has attended a school).

Other than the outdatedness of the form, several primary challenges have been identified and are listed below:

- Only a doctor or a registered nurse can officially sign off the form.
- There are limited health professionals who can carry out “specific or specialised assessments”.
- There is a perception that the form can only be completed by a Public Doctor.
- Health professionals completing the form might not know how to assess certain abilities needed to complete the form.
- There is reluctance of health professionals to complete the form.

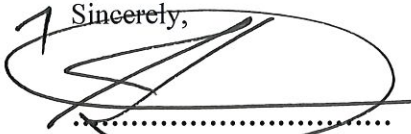
An elaboration of these points and the impact they have on the parents and guardians of such learners is attached in Annexure A.

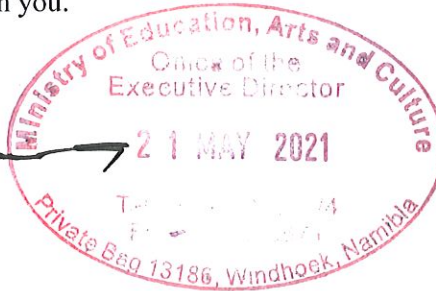
As part of the review process, the Ministry has already engaged our regional staff, key line ministries and developmental partners for inputs. As an association with members that are health professionals and whose scope of work include children of school-going age (and therefore a vested interest), we are also seeking your inputs on the improvement of the form and (where possible) the process of application.

It is against this background that the Ministry humbly requests your input on how to make the process more accessible and less cumbersome for the parents and guardians of these children. The deadline for inputs is **C.O.B., Friday, the 4th of June 2021.**

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant staff at carikemans@gmail.com or ibarrion.moe@gmail.com as stipulated in the overhead above.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

.....
Sanet L. Steenkamp
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



.....
Date

ANNEXURE A: ELABORATION ON THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED WITH EXISTING APPLICATION FORM FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT.

- ***Only a doctor or a registered nurse can officially sign off the form.***

Based on the current primary health care system, there are not enough doctors or registered nurses at the regional level. The nearest primary health clinic for the parent or guardian is likely to be managed by an enrolled nurse, who may be limited in their scope to complete such a form. As such access to these professionals will require parents and guardians to travel long distances and can prove costly to access their services.

- ***There are limited health professionals who can carry out “specific or specialised assessments”.***

Related to the previous point, is the perception that various components of the form need to be completed by specific (if not specialised) health professions whose scope addresses the ability of the learner on the form. For example, hearing abilities can only be assessed by an Audiologist, Visual abilities by an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist and Speech by a Speech Language Therapist, respectively. Also, children with diverse needs can only be placed in a school, unit or class if a psychological assessment is carried out by a Psychologist and a report is attached. In many cases these professionals are not based on the same premises available, especially at regional level. The limited scope of enrolled nurses as well as limited number of such professionals once again requires the parents and guardians to travel long distance and is costly.

- ***There is a perception that the form can only be completed by a Public Doctor.***

This means that it excludes the possibility of persons who have access to Private Health Care to seek such services and thereby, minimise the workload of overburdened state professionals.

- ***Health professionals completing the form might not know how to assess certain abilities needed to complete the form.***

The belief that every learner that does not perform well in school needs to be placed in a Special School, Unit or Class. In certain instances, health professionals completing the form might not know how to assess certain abilities and distinguish between learners who can cope in mainstream school and those who require specific learning support provided by the Special School, Unit or Class. Such health professionals rely on what is reported by the parent or guardian including that the learner does not perform well in school. Hence, the form is completed and submitted to the Special School, Unit or Class resulting in the learner falsely being placed on waiting list of a school due to limited availability or space. When further clarity is required from the Public Doctor, it is challenging to obtain further information for other reasons including whether they are registered with the Health Professions Council of Namibia (HPCNA). This results in a lack of accountability of the persons completing the form.

- ***There is reluctance of health professionals to complete the form.***

Considering the various challenges stipulated above, many health professionals refuse to complete the required form as they may feel it is not their responsibility, leaving parents and guardians frustrated, disheartened and not keen to pursue further. As a result, the children are affected as they do not have access to the right to education. These children then become out-of-school children (OOSC) with limited options for future employment and financial independence. Such individuals are at risk of becoming dependent on social grants and thereby place additional and unnecessary strain on the Namibian economy.

