

A TELEPHONIC PRE-TESTING HIV COUNSELLING SERVICE

Consumers who apply for life insurance policies that require an **HIV test** are now able to receive **telephonic pre-test counselling** via a toll free number before taking the HIV test.

Gerhard Joubert, LOA CE, says by making counselling available via a call centre, South Africa has achieved another world first. Internationally, in the insurance environment, life insurance applicants receive only written pre-test counselling information before consenting to the HIV test. "While this has been available in South Africa as well," says Joubert, "LOA member companies and their partnering pathology groups have also been offering individual pre-test counselling by trained counsellors at the laboratories."

The LOA approaches an independent service provider in order to provide nationwide telephonic pre-test counselling. The new service became available at the beginning of July, and can be accessed from 07:00 to 19:00, Mondays to Fridays, in all official languages.

"Half of the costs of the call centre," says Joubert, "will be funded by the National Pathology Group (NPG), which represents most of the private laboratories who conduct the HIV tests on behalf of life companies."

Clients can access this telephonic pre-test counselling service once they have applied for a policy which requires an HIV test by calling 0800 562 562 and providing their name, the insurance company's

number. Counsellors are trained in everything relating to HIV/Aids, as well as the relevant insurance aspects.

Counsellors will inform callers of their rights, which include:

- The right not to be tested, which may, however, result in the application for life insurance being declined.
- The right to consider alternative life products that do not require testing for HIV.
- The right to confidential pre-test counselling, which will inform the applicant of the implications of taking the test.
- The right to have the test results treated confidentially.
- The right to post-test counselling should the test be positive.
