

MEDIA ADVISORY

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MINISTER DLAMINI TO GATHER AND ADDRESS 1 500 OLDER PERSONS IN BLOEMFONTEIN

As part of the Social Development Month programme, the Minister of Social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini has invited 1 500 older persons from around the country to address their issues in Bloemfontein.

The Minister in conjunction with the South African Older Persons Forum (SAOPF) will use the annual SAOPF to discuss key issues that affect older persons including safety in residential care facilities, financial exploitation of older persons by the loan sharks as well as their roles in the family and in the broader community. Specifically the Minister will raise issues pertaining to the role of older persons as primary care-givers in the context of HIV and AIDS.

The Minister is also interested in assessing the experiences of Older Persons in relation to services such as Old age grant, innovative solutions to make sure that older persons are treated with dignity when accessing social grants at pay-point.

This first of its kind gathering comes at a time when there have been a number of incidences in residential care facilities that unfortunately resulted in loss of human life. In terms of the Older Persons Act (Act 13 of 2006) the Minister of Social Development is the custodian of all matters related to the well-being of older persons.

The cornerstone of the Act in relation to the care and support of older persons is care in the family and community, with the overall aim being to support older persons with means to live a decent and dignified lives in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

When living at home is no longer possible it is important that older persons have access to the best residential care available, whether it be in a general hospital, community-based facility or private nursing home. The safety and well-being of older people living in any of these settings is of critical concern to the Department of Social Development and to government as a whole.

Since assuming the Social Development Portfolio, Minister Dlamini continues to work tirelessly to raise public awareness about the rights of older persons and important role of older persons in family and community life.

Speaking ahead of the gathering, Minister Dlamini said: "The older population in this country has made an invaluable contribution to all aspects of the South African life. There is no doubt that our families and society as a whole benefit enormously from the presence and participation of those who have seen what life has to offer, particularly our senior citizens who lived through the hard years of apartheid"

Whilst acknowledging that most of our senior citizens are healthy and living actively and continue to play an important role in their families and communities, I am concerned

about a number of issues. One of my priorities in this portfolio is to ensure that we coordinate all departments and civil society organisations to work towards improving all aspects of the lives of older people by focusing not only on health issues but also giving consideration to the quality of accommodation, security, welfare, and all other issues which affect older persons”, added Minister Dlamini.

The full details of the event are as follows:

Date: 19 October 2011

Time: 10h00-15h30

Venue: Seeisa Ramabodu Stadium, Mangaung-Free State Province

The Minister will also address the annual Golden Games which seek to promote healthy lifestyle, active ageing, friendship and solidarity amongst older persons. The Games are premised on the staunch belief that older persons who retire from work can remain active contributors to their families, peers, communities and nations. Active ageing aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they get older. Ageing takes place within the context of family, friends, work associates and community. This is why active ageing is an important aspect of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. And that is why the Golden Games serves as an important tenet of active ageing.

Members of the media are invited to attend and cover all the events.

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