

The Weekly

MORE SOCIAL WORKERS EMPLOYED IN THE PROVINCE

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Bolstering social work ... The MEC for social development, Sisi Ntombela, has welcomed the employment of 38 more social workers

The department of social development in the province has heeded the call for more social workers. The department will be employing 38 more social workers to work throughout the province.

The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) found in 2012 that there were 16 740 social workers in the country registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. SAIRR said 6 655 were employed in government, 2 634 were in non-governmental organization and 7 451 were either employed in the private sector or were not practicing.

The findings show that the national population to social worker ratio was 5 446 to one. The lowest province ratio was in the Eastern Cape with 4 903 people to one social worker while the highest was in the Free State with 5 935 people to one social worker.

Social development MEC, Sisi Ntombela, said the department is vigorously addressing the shortage of social workers in the province.

“These social workers will undergo a weeklong induction programme that is meant to prepare them for the workplace. This is part of heeding a call to increase the scarce skill. We are making great strides in addressing this challenge. We still have a long way to go because we still need more social workers in the province.

“For instance, Xhariep district needed 40 social workers and requested 20 but could only get nine. This is how much we can stretch to provide social workers. But we also want to express our appreciation for the hard work done by the few social workers we already have in the field,” said Ntombela.

The department's move is part of a country-wide campaign that includes issuing bursaries to nearly 5 000 students to pursue social work studies in different universities across the country.

The roll-out of scholarships started in 2011 and the 38 social workers are products of the programme. Out of this number, 20 will be sent to work in the rural Xhariep district. The department is also recruiting, training and employing child and youth workers. These workers will help in providing services that do not need intense professional social work intervention.

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Services offered by social workers range from prevention and treatment of substance abuse to crime prevention and HIV and AIDS support. According to the department of social development, the new social workers will boost the available social workers already in the field. The department intends employing and training more social workers in future.

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