

GOVERNMENT URGES THE NATION TO ENSURE HEIGHTENED CARE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES DURING THE NATIONAL DISASTER PERIOD

The Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane urges every citizen to play their part in ensuring heightened care and access to information for persons with disabilities.

Government wants to remind the public that persons with disabilities are among those who are particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of COVID-19, especially during the State of Disaster and the national lockdown we are currently under. Persons with disabilities, the elderly, those in frail care, and children with disabilities continue to remain at the periphery of society and are isolated from activities during the best of times. During the national lockdown these groups face increased isolation through their physical conditions as well as through a lack of accessible information.

To ensure that persons with disabilities and their families continue to receive services during the lockdown, residential facilities, including care centres and community-based facilities will remain operational as they form part of the essential services to be rendered.

Society must ensure that information on COVID-19 is made available in accessible formats, on appropriate platforms, including accessible digital technology to cater for the needs of persons with disabilities. This must also apply to the interpretation of speeches and addresses into SA Sign Language. The department calls on all media organisations to ensure that televised press briefings have sign language Interpreters, that transcripts are made available, and closed captions is utilized for persons with hearing difficulties.

To ensure that persons with disabilities receive accessible information during this critical time, the Gender Based Violence Command Centre (GBVCC) (0800 428 428) has a Skype Line (add “Helpme GBV” to your Skype contacts) and “Please Call Me” facility: *120*7867#. An SMS Based Line is also available on 31531.

CALL TO ACTION:

- Let us all work together to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities in all spheres of life.
- We can support persons with disabilities by promoting, protecting and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in our areas of influence.
- Caregivers assisting people with disabilities are essential service workers.
- Caregivers are essential in ensuring that persons with disabilities continue to access services and goods during the lockdown.
- Caregivers will continue to assist persons with disabilities to access their social grants and to perform other essential tasks.
- Persons with special needs will continue to be allowed to leave their homes for essential tasks.
- The standard practices on persons with visual impairments who have guide dogs will apply.
- Relevant government departments will support people with disabilities in obtaining food and other essential services.

- We encourage essential service providers to support the elderly and persons with disabilities by establishing exclusive hours to buy necessities.

We encourage all South Africans to show increased care and support for at-risk groups within society during this national lockdown period.

ENDS

For interviews contact Ms Mmabatho Ramompi on 076 480 3513
/ mmabatho.ramompi@women.gov.za

For further information contact Mr Shalen Gajadhar on 060 979 4235
/ shalen.gajadhar@women.gov.za

Know and Share these contact details:

GBV Command Centre: 0800 428 428 / *120*7867# from any cell phone

Persons with disabilities, SMS 'help' to 31531

Women Abuse Helpline: 0800 150 150

Child line: 0800 055 555

SAPS Crime Stop: 0860 10111

GBVF-related service complaints (SAPS): 0800 333 177/

complaintsnodalpoint@saps.gov.za

National AIDS Helpline: 0800 012 322

National Human Trafficking Helpline: 0800 222 777

Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567

National Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.za>

National Institute of Communicable Diseases: <https://www.nicd.ac.za>

World Health Organisation: <https://www.who.int>

Coronavirus Hotline: 0800 029 999

Twitter: @DWYPD_ZA

Instagram: @dwypdza

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Website: www.women.gov.za