

MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19: PSA call for intervention to address shortage of PPE in Limpopo

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is deeply concerned about the shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at public facilities such as Clinics, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) tasked with critical services in Limpopo during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the PSA acknowledges the efforts of the employer in trying to ensure that all these facilities are adequately equipped with masks, gloves and sanitisers, it seems to be a huge challenge for the employer. The Province has some 450 clinics and 22 Health Centres, excluding hospitals. Clinics are mostly in remote and rural areas with poor road and communication infrastructure, resulting in most of them being without even basic medicines. More than 50% of these clinics do not have the required PPE. Most of the rural clinics are not provided with the PPE and officials are expected to do their job without protection. The EMS and DCS facilities are also without the PPE and the employer has admitted that it is struggling with procurement owing to shortages.

The PSA calls for the Department of Health and Office of the Premier to be realistic about its capacity to effectively deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The PSA also requests the Department of Health to consider closing some of these clinics to ensure that limited resources are not unnecessarily stretched beyond limit at the expense of its employees' lives. The stretching of limited resources is not helping anyone and exposes employees who must assist with the containment of the spreading of the virus.

The PSA also calls upon the Office of the Premier of Limpopo to intervene as there seems to be a lack of urgency, particularly by the Department of Health, which is at the centre of the management of the crisis. There is deep concern about the Department's ability to manage the situation, should the virus spread to rural areas. Should there not be progress in dealing with this matter, the PSA will be forced to consider drastic measures to protect employees' lives.

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