

MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19: PSA concerned about lack of commitment to curb infections in Correctional centres

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 13 000 employees of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), is extremely concerned about a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections amongst Correctional officials.

To date more, than 1 876 Correctional officials and inmates have been infected, with more than 143 new cases being reported in the last two days. The first COVID-19 cases have also been reported at Correctional centres in the Free State, North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. This has set the stage for cases to grow exponentially in these centres.

The PSA on 20 April 2020 made written proposals to the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services and the National Commissioner of Correctional Services to prevent the spread of the virus in correctional centres. The proposals included a 50% reduction in officials per shift and to rotate shifts only after five days to ensure that officials are not unnecessary exposed to the virus and to build an additional layer of officials in case of outbreaks. In addition, community corrections should not require parolees to sign attendance using pens and attendance forms. It was also recently requested in the National Steering Committee that transport be provided for Correctional officials to ensure that they are not exposed to the virus by using public transport and infect inmates.

The PSA is extremely disappointed that none of these proposals were implemented and neither the Minister nor the National Commissioner bothered to even engage the PSA on the proposals. The PSA therefore urgently repeats the Union's calls on the Minister and the National Commissioner to implement the proposed preventative measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the Correctional Services environment.

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