

MEDIA RELEASE

North-West Social Development Maquassie Hills Service Point: PSA calls for intervention in dangerous working environment

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 15 000 employees in North West, is shocked about the ongoing dangerous and life-threatening working conditions at the North-West Department of Social Development's Maquassie Hills Service Point.

Despite the spike COVID-19 infections in North West, some 70 employees of the Department, consisting of social workers, auxiliary workers, community health practitioners and support staff are expected to report for duty at a workplace that has insufficient space to maintain social distancing. This situation not only poses a danger to these employees, but to members of the public who visit the service point daily. The Department acquired the office, which consists of open-office space, from SASSA three years ago. It was, however, clear from the onset that the space is not suitable to accommodate such a large number of employees. Members of the public have to be served outside the premises owing to the lack of space.

The insufficient office space has now developed into a life-threatening situation, which the Department does not acknowledge. Some officials have been hospitalised because of the poor working conditions.

The PSA has addressed this unhealthy and unsafe situation on numerous occasions in writing and during meetings with the Department but was met with empty promises. The unsafe conditions have also been reported to the Department of Employment and Labour for inspection of the premises.

The PSA, in addition, calls on the MEC for Social Development to intervene and to urgently correct the unsafe conditions at the Service Point to ensure the health and safety of employees and members of the public.

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