

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA appalled by lack of precaution and protection for staff at Alexandra Clinic**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is appalled with the failure by the Gauteng Department of Health to take precautionary measures for the protection of healthcare workers against COVID-19 at the Masakhane Clinic in Alexandra.

A staff member at the Clinic tested positive for the virus and the Department was informed about the case. The Department, however, failed to react promptly to contain the spread and none of the COVID-19 protocols and guidelines for precautionary measures was followed. The staff member who tested positive was in contact with other staff members and patients and their movements were not limited to one area. Despite this, management allowed the Clinic to continue operating as normal from Sunday until Tuesday without any precautionary measures being put in place.

The PSA is furthermore aware that the information about the employee testing positive for COVID-19 was kept secret by management, but the information was later leaked to other employees. Healthcare workers are now anxious and reluctant to perform their duties and are fearing for their health and safety. The PSA believes that the Department is in contravention of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* as the Health MEC, Dr Bandile Masuku, was adamant that services at the Clinic must continue as normal without tracking and tracing the movements of the infected employee.

The PSA strongly condemns this reckless behaviour by Dr Masuku, which is placing employees and the public's lives at risk. The PSA calls upon the Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize, to assist and support the Gauteng Department of Health in creating a proper response strategy to deal with cases emanating from COVID-19, including the protection of healthcare workers who are key in fighting the pandemic.

The PSA will not hesitate to take appropriate legal action to protect employees, especially in situations where their health and safety are at risk.

END