

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for actions following suspected food poisoning incident at Gobisizwe Agricultural School, Eastern Cape
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EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about an alarming incident where approximately 131 learners at Gobisizwe Agricultural School in Ngqeleni in the Eastern Cape had to be treated for suspected acute food poisoning on 13 August 2025.

According to reports from the Eastern Cape Department of Health, the learners displayed symptoms such as dizziness, vomiting, diarrhoea, seizures, and abdominal pain after allegedly consuming rice and tinned fish during school meals. Emergency Medical Services in Mthatha responded swiftly, transporting affected learners to Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital, Mthatha Regional Hospital, and Ngangelizwe Community Health Centre for urgent medical care.

The PSA trusts that all the learners will have a speedy recovery and commends the rapid response by medical teams. The PSA is, however, alarmed by the recurrence of such incidents, despite the Eastern Cape Department of Education's previous warnings and directives on food safety in schools under the National School Nutrition Programme. This incident underscores the urgent need for strict adherence to food-safety protocols by all schools and service providers, regular inspections, and monitoring of food preparation and storage conditions. Additionally, the immediate accreditation and compliance enforcement for all vendors operating on school premises and stronger accountability measures for any negligence endangering the health of learners are required.

The PSA reiterates that the safety and wellbeing of learners must remain paramount. Schools, service providers, and authorities must work together to ensure that meals provided to learners are safe, nutritious, and prepared in hygienic conditions. The PSA calls for a full investigation into the source of contamination, with appropriate action taken against any party found to have been negligent. The PSA will continue to monitor developments and engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that measures are strengthened to prevent similar incidents in the future.

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