

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA concerned about placement of learners in Limpopo and implications for employees**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) was alerted that some employees of the Department of Education in Polokwane were on 18 January 2022 held hostage by angry parents whose children were not yet placed in schools because the Department failed to address the challenge pertaining to placement of learners.

Angry parents converged at the Department of Education's Provincial Office in Polokwane and resorted to protest in an attempt to push the Department to consider their plight. What is of extreme concern is that the Department was aware of learners who were not placed, especially in cities such as Polokwane, and did not address the matter, thus exposing its employees to agitated parents. This resulted in some employees not being able to collect their children from child-minding facilities whilst others missed their transport owing to the hostage situation.

Agitated parents pose risks to employees who are placed in the firing line trying to assist parents in the absence of proper planning by the Department. It appears that the Department does not have measures in place to address the challenge, which is concerning as it is experiencing the same problem every year without a permanent solution.

The problem is fuelled by the perception that rural schools are offering substandard education, forcing many parents to compete for the limited opportunities at schools located in cities. Whilst the issue of migration of families from rural areas to cities creates a capacity challenge for the Department, there is still a need for proper planning to deal with the matter prior to commencement of the 2022 school calendar. The Department indicated its readiness to receive learners, which proves to be incorrect and resulting in the protest by parents.

The PSA advised the Department to find workable and lasting interventions to accommodate learners who must be placed at schools in major centres in Limpopo such as Polokwane and Lephalale.

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