

FOR PSA MEMBERS: SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY (SASSA)

28-04-2020

What's happening at SASSA?

Additional social relief measures

On 21 April 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced additional economic and social relief measures as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include the child grant that will be increased by R300 in May and R500 per caregiver from June to October 2020. All other grants will be topped up by R250 per month for six months. There will be a special COVID-19 grant of R350 for unemployed persons who do not receive any other grant for six months.

The PSA enquired from the employer what impact these announcements will have on SASSA employees. The employer reported that for the remainder of Stage 5 lockdown (due to end on 30 April 2020), all local offices will remain closed and employees who have been home will not be recalled apart for managers and senior managers who have already been recalled. The adjustment of amounts for pension beneficiaries will not require offices to open or direct encounter with beneficiaries – the adjustment will be done electronically. In addition, the employer is developing a system for the unemployment grant application to be sent remotely through applicants' cellphones using the USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) or WhatsApp process to register. These measures will be taken to ensure that SASSA does not open itself up to the risk of overcrowded offices by beneficiaries. Communication will be sent out broadly to the public, informing them of the new process and that they do not need to visit SASSA offices for applications.

Preparations for return of employees to work

Pursuant to the announcement by the President on 23 April 2020 on the start of Stage 4 of the lockdown, some employers will be allowed to recall their workforce in phases. In anticipation that SASSA may also need to recall some of its employees to gradually return to work, the PSA requested the employer to share its implementation plan. The identification of specific units that will be required to return to work as early as 4 May 2020 has not been concluded. However, an indication was made to the PSA that call-center employees are in the group of employees who will be required to report for duty.

On enquiry by the PSA regarding the safety measures put in place, the employer indicated that:

- All offices will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised with disinfectant chemicals before employees' return.
- Employees who are 60 years and above will be given an option to work from home.
- Employees with chronic health conditions, which the employer is still not aware of, will be required to provide medical letters indicating that they have conditions that place them at risk in relation to

the virus. If an employee is not comfortable to disclose the nature of the condition, the medical letter will still be required, even if it does not disclose the nature of the condition.

- Employees may be required to report for duty on rotational basis to to comply with the requirement of one third of staff at a given time.
- Employees will undergo screening by temperature testing when entering SASSA offices.
- Masks and sanitisers will be provided to all employees.
- Social distancing and regular hand washing will be encouraged.
- Employees with flu-like symptoms will be required to stay at home until they are well.

The employer has invited the PSA to a meeting on 29 April 2020 to engage on new working hours in line with lockdown restrictions. Members will be provided with feedback after the meeting.

GENERAL MANAGER