

INFORMUS



FOR PSA MEMBERS: *GENERAL 1/2021* (MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES MEDICAL AID SCHEME (GEMS))

13-01-2021

Update: GEMS funding of COVID-19 vaccine roll-out

Members should take note that on 7 January 2021, GEMS issued a media statement in which it confirmed its readiness, support and commitment for Government's efforts to ensure broader reach of the COVID-19 vaccine for its members and their dependents.

This will be in line with the priority groups identified in the COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-out Strategy of Government.

It should also be noted that it is indicated that GEMS will be paying for the approved vaccine and all costs will be covered as a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB).

Members can obtain more information from the attached media statement on the website of GEMS.

GENERAL MANAGER

GEMS on track to support Covid-19 vaccine rollout efforts for its members in the public service

07 January 2021: Following the announcement by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize on the Covid-19 vaccine rollout strategy, the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) has affirmed its readiness to support government efforts to ensure broader reach of the vaccine for its members and their dependants, in line with the priority groups identified in the strategy.

According to Dr Stan Moloabi, Principal Officer at GEMS, “the Scheme is ready and committed to paying for the approved vaccine to the benefit of a large number of frontline workers as our members are mostly frontline workers in the public sector, and the vaccine funding allocation will go a long way in protecting them.

Once the approval by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) is obtained for the clinically appropriate vaccine that is being centrally procured by the Government, GEMS will fund the vaccine/s for all members who stand to receive the vaccine in line with rollout strategy announced by the Minister.

The funding will be prioritised for vaccination in line with the targeted population groups to support efforts to achieve herd immunity through the three-phased approach announced by Minister Mkhize. The vaccine rollout will be guided by the protocols prescribed by experts assisting government.

As a member-centric Scheme, we are fully committed to our mandate which is to provide equitable and affordable access to healthcare to Public Service employees”, he highlighted.

Dr Moloabi further confirmed that GEMS will continue to cover the Covid-19 vaccine as part of the Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) entitlements in line with the pronouncements of the Regulator, the Registrar of the CMS. Therefore, all costs will be covered as a PMB and current member contributions and benefit allocation will not be affected.

Dr Moloabi highlighted that, although the cost of each dose of the vaccine is still unknown and dependent on the outcome of Government’s Covid-19 vaccination centralised procurement process which is currently underway, the Scheme remains ready to fund the vaccine as it had already committed a budget for the vaccine in its 2021 benefit entitlements thus taking strides that will enhance the vaccination reach.

Finally, it is our view that: “This pandemic is a test to the systems that the country is developing to drive the implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) in the country. By providing universal access to the Covid-19 vaccine in line with the country’s priorities and individual healthcare needs, we have the opportunity to collaborate and demonstrate that we can realise Universal Healthcare Coverage and provide equitable access to quality healthcare for the country.” concluded Dr Moloabi.

GEMS, as a member of the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) along with other schemes to develop a detailed framework that will guide the industry and the member schemes of vaccine funding.

GEMS is the largest restricted medical scheme and covers the highest number of Public Service employees in the country, with over 754 000 principal members and 1.9 million beneficiaries. The Scheme also has the broadest definition of beneficiaries, covering a more comprehensive range of extended family members.

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