

What is happening in SASSA?

Risk-adjusted plan for COVID-19 and assistance of clients with disability grant applications

The PSA noted with concern that the Executive Manager who was appointed as the COVID-19 Compliance Officer has recently left SASSA and the employer has not announced the appointment of another Compliance Officer in her place. This has resulted in labour being left in the dark regarding the risk-adjusted plan for COVID-19 response. Regions have exercised discretion in recalling staff where others have remained at 50% of staff complement, others have increased to 75% and some have even recalled 100% of staff. These inconsistencies are of serious concern to the PSA, especially where employees are recalled to offices that do not have proper ventilation or adequate space for social distancing. The PSA demanded that a Compliance Officer be appointed immediately and convene a meeting with labour and the Executive Manager for grants, to discuss the risk-adjusted plan and the intervention needed to resolve concerns that have been received from various regions. In the absence of the Compliance Officer, the Chief Executive Officer should convene the requested meeting on or before 31 March 2021.

SOCPEN fraud cases

During 2019, a SOCPEN Fraud Task Team was established by the SNBF after labour raised concerns regarding its members being arrested and charged for alleged SOCPEN fraud activities. The concerns emanated from what appeared to be organised crimes by syndicates that were able to process fraudulent transactions on the system and some innocent employees taking the fall for the crimes. When the Task Team was established, labour and the employer agreed that all SOCPEN fraud-related disciplinary cases will be put in abeyance until the investigation of the Task Team is completed and a further decision is taken by parties. The PSA was disappointed to learn that the employer has not honoured the agreement in some regions where disciplinary action is being carried out against employees in matters relating to SOCPEN fraud. The Task Team completed its investigation and handed a report to the CEO with recommendations that still need to be implemented. The decision to uplift the suspension on disciplinary cases has not been taken and the PSA called on the employer to honour this agreement by instructing all regions to not proceed with action against employees on these issues. A response is awaited from the CEO on the PSA's demand.

SASSA online grants applications

The employer reported that because of the online grants application process, centralised units will be established in every region, tasked with the responsibility of administering and verifying online grant applications. Currently the employer has a backlog of online applications that have not been processed and hence the function will be temporarily centralised. Furthermore, the disability grant application will be added to the online platform through the website and mobile app that is being developed. Clients will be able to book appointments for medical assessments and download all relevant forms from the system and only be required to be at the SASSA office only once when they will be coming for the assessment. The PSA emphasised the need to ensure that the system is safe and not vulnerable to cyber crime and syndicates that will defraud it and have SASSA employees taking the fall for such actions. The PSA further demanded that the employer should consult labour in all the regions through Regional Consultative Forums on the establishment of the centralised unit, the rotation of staff for developmental purposes as well as all the intended plans with regard to the online application system.

Members will be updated on developments.

GENERAL MANAGER