

Update: R171 intake and staffing developments in the Mpumalanga Department of Health

The PSA wishes to update members on recent engagements with the Department of Health regarding key matters affecting employees and service delivery.

R171 intake for 2026

Following a meeting held on 23 March with the MEC, organised labour sought feedback on its demand that at least 50% of candidates admitted into the R171 programme be sourced from internal employees. Regrettably, the response received, informed by national counterparts, was not favourable. The Department indicated that this proposal can only be considered from the next intake cycle. In light of this unsatisfactory outcome and the limited number of internal candidates allocated for the current intake, only seven (7) employees in the entire province will be taken in for the R171 programme for 2026 intake, the PSA and organised labour collectively were not happy with this response and resolved on a collective basis, not to participate in the 2026 selection process. This position is premised on the need to avoid legitimising a process that does not meet the standards of fairness.

The PSA is of the firm view that the current approach is inherently unfair and may amount to discriminatory practice, in that employees who are already in employment in the Department are effectively disadvantaged solely on the basis of their employment status, despite meeting the prescribed requirements for admission. This creates an unjustifiable differentiation between internal and external candidates, which undermines the principles of fairness, equity, and equal access to opportunities within the public service. The employer has, however, committed that from next year all sub-campus will be fully functional, which is expected to significantly increase the intake of internal candidates. The PSA will closely monitor this commitment to ensure that it translates into tangible opportunities for our members.

Shortage of staff in the Department of Health

On 17 March, the PSA engaged the employer in a productive meeting arising from a Chamber resolution to address the ongoing staff shortage within the Department of Health. During this engagement, the employer presented a comprehensive and promising plan to fill vacant posts across the Department.

Furthermore, the employer indicated that, with effect from 1 April 2026, the contracts of data capturers will be extended for a further period while we continue bargaining with the employer to appoint them permanently. This marks a significant milestone and a victory for the PSA, which has consistently advocated for the retention and permanent appointment of these employees. The PSA emphasises that data capturers play a critical role in the functioning of healthcare facilities. Their work ensures the availability of accurate data, which is essential for effective planning, resource allocation, and overall service delivery. Without these personnel, administrative systems within clinics would be severely compromised.

The PSA views these developments as a reflection of the value of constructive engagement between organised labour and the employer. While challenges remain, progress in key areas demonstrates that sustained advocacy yields results. The PSA remains committed to protecting the interests of members, promoting fair labour practices, and ensuring that service delivery within the public health sector is not undermined by staffing constraints or inequitable processes. The PSA will continue to monitor the implementation of all commitments made by the employer and will not hesitate to act should there be any deviation from agreed positions.

To join the PSA, contact your PSA Mpumalanga Organising/Marketing Officers:
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