



27 June 2018

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT LEARNER PREGNANCY POLICY

The Department of Basic Education has extended the deadline for written submissions on the National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools.

Earlier this year the Department issued a gazette in which it invited comments from stakeholder bodies and members of the public on the policy. The Department has now created another opportunity for public comment as requested by some stakeholders.

The rate of learner pregnancy in South Africa has become a major social, systemic and fiscal challenge not only for the basic education sector but, crucially, for the national development in general. It impacts the lives of many young people often limiting their personal growth, the pursuit of rewarding careers and their ambitions with incalculable impact on the country's socio-economic systems.

The Department acknowledges its central role in the social sector's collective response to this challenge. In this policy the Department sets out its goals, guiding principles and policy themes to stabilize and reduce the incidence of learner pregnancy and its adverse effects on the education system.

This Policy seeks to ensure the accessible provision of information on prevention; choice of termination of pregnancy (CToP); care, counselling and support; frameworks for impact mitigation; and guidelines for systemic management and implementation. In particular, it commits the basic education system and other role players to providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) crucial to optimal sexual and reproductive health.

The aim of CSE is to ensure that young people gain the knowledge and skills to make conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality.

It provides an age -appropriate, culturally- relevant and right-based approach to sexuality and relationships, which explicitly addresses issues of gender and power, and provides scientifically accurate, practical information in a non-judgmental way.

Of central importance this Policy asserts the Constitutional rights of pregnant learners to continue and complete their basic education without stigma or discrimination.

In addition it requires that the DBE and its structures provide quality CSE and adolescent and youth -friendly sexual and reproductive health services, or referral to the latter.

CSE should include counselling on the range of options, including the choice of termination of pregnancy. Specifically, it confirms that there should be no exclusion of pregnant learners who must be allowed to remain in school during their pregnancies and return as soon after giving birth as is appropriate for both the learner and her child. For its part, the school is required to accommodate the reasonable needs of the learner to ensure that her right to education is not disrupted or ended by pregnancy or birth. This may imply short- to medium -term absences from school and an undertaking to hold a place in the system for the return of the learner and the completion of her basic education. Details of this Policy protocol are addressed in the Implementation Plan.

All interested parties are invited to comment on the Policy in writing via email to pregnancypolicy@dbe.gov.za or fax to 012 328 8401. Kindly provide name, address, telephone number, email address of the organization submitting the comment.

Closing date for comments is **30 July 2018**.

The policy document is available on the www.education.org.za

Enquiries: Elijah Mhlanga – 083 580 8275
Troy Martens – 078 899 3070

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION