



GOVERNANCE STATE CAPACITY AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GSCID) CLUSTER

MEDIA BRIEFING

16:00

Wednesday, 25 March 2020

Statement by the Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Mr Senzo Mchunu

Ministers

Deputy Ministers

Directors-General

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for joining us and once again, we welcome you to this Briefing.

The focus of the Public Service is the continuous provision of critical and essential services required for the effective functioning of the Public Service during the nationwide lockdown as declared by the President of the Republic following decision of the National Command Council.

To this effect, the DPSA has issued Directives and Circulars which will ensure that all National Departments and Provincial Administrations deliver critical and essential public services and for all of them to contribute towards the containment of COVID-19.

Following declaration of the state of national disaster by the President, the DPSA issued Circular no.7 to outline measures for the containment and management of the COVID-19 in the public service, which include provision of necessary tools to contain the spread of the Coronavirus.

It is important therefore to state unequivocally that during this period of nationwide lockdown, government will continue to provide certain critical and essential public services that need to be provided at all times even in a time of disaster of this nature.

I am well aware and conscious of the fact that Public Servants are very anxious about this difficult situation facing us. We are in a different terrain, we are in a state of war to contain the spread of the pandemic and if it is not contained it will also devastate the Public Service.

We would like to assure all public servants who are providing critical and essential that we will ensure a safe working environment. We have directed all Heads of Department to make specific arrangements and provide public transport to staff performing critical and essential service. We have also undertaken to increase protection in the work place.

CRITICAL AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

All Directors-General and Heads of Department have been directed to identify the minimum critical and essential services that must and shall remain available to the public. Such must be informed by risk assessment and determining the socio-economic impact of the unavailability of services to the citizenry.

A Head of Department must therefore put in place plans and measures that will ensure service delivery continuity of critical and essential services. For the duration of the state of disaster for COVID-19, Heads of Department must consider and approve the institutional capacity of their respective departments.

Critical and essential services must be fully operational and be escalated with redeployed resources from non-critical services to where needed. Heads of Department must consider a rotation system for this group of employees.

A Head of Department may consider remote work arrangements within the framework of the department's service delivery imperatives.

Employees responsible for the rendering of direct critical and essential services should not be considered for the arrangement of remote work.

Employees occupying non-critical that do not necessitate their presence at the workplace, should be considered for a remote work arrangement or alternatively be considered for redeployment to critical services.

We have also taken a decision to approach retired and former public servants with required skills such as health professionals and engineers for deployment to critical services where needed.

All Departments have been provided with a Guide on what should be regarded as critical and essential services. All HoDs are urged to consider their own environment and business needs and determine the staff required to provide such service. Ministers have already communicated in detail essential services in their respective portfolios.

Furthermore, all Heads of Department must provide staff for critical services including:

- Payment for service providers and salaries;
- HR support to employees at work and those working remotely and
- Budget and planning processes.

We are very heartened that Public Servants, especially in the Health and Security sectors, have been mobilised and readily accepted to serve the nation during this desperate hour of service and the role they need to play.

I want to join the President in thanking all public servants in the health sector, education and security who are on the frontline and all the other people who have been leading our response. We thank them most sincerely and urge all of them to march on and serve at all times.

CONCLUSION

To all Public Servants who will be home or working remotely from home during the lockdown, we urge them to wake up daily and perform their duties.

We also call upon Public Servants to be cautious as there is an invisible killer lurking amongst us. You can do your bit to slow its passage through the corners of our country by observing all protocols communicated by our government including the Social Distancing Guidelines and Staying at Home during this period of 21 Days.

I urge you to be sensible and together with your families to see the bright side of adversity.

As of today, Wednesday, 25 March 2020, as Minister for the Public Service and Administration I have signed the Directive determining provision of critical and essential services required for the effective functioning of the public service during the COVID-19 and the 21-day lockdown.

These Directives will be published on our website and social media pages shortly.

I thus direct all Directors-General and Heads of Department in National and Provincial Administrations to implement this Directive.

It is during this critical time that the Batho Pele Value Statement – *We Belong* (to our people), *We Care* (about our people), *We Serve* (our people) - becomes more appropriate. As a Public Service, we shall not fail on our service delivery responsibilities.

I thank you.

Webpage: www.dpsa.gov.za

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