basic education
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Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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TO: HEADS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS
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PSYCHOLOGISTS
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS
PHYSIOTHERAPISTS
SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPISTS
SOCIAL WORKERS
COUNSELLORS
ALL OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

CIRCULAR S8 OF 2026: SHARING OF PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORTS, MULTIDISCIPLINARY SUPPORT AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES FOR LEARNERS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Circular is to provide uniform national guidance on the preparation, sharing and use of professional assessment reports, multidisciplinary collaboration and the continuity of specialist support for learners requiring additional support.

1.2 This Circular further seeks to ensure that professional services provided by psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language therapists, social workers, counsellors, education specialists and other support professionals employed by Provincial Education Departments are aligned to the constitutional and legislative mandate of the basic education sector, namely the provision of quality basic education to every learner.

1.3 The Circular applies to all Provincial Education Departments and all specialist professionals employed by, contracted to, or rendering services on behalf of Provincial Education Departments.

2. Legal and Policy Basis

2.1 This Circular is issued in terms of the constitutional and legislative responsibilities of the Department of Basic Education and must be read together with all applicable legislation and policies governing learner support.

2.2 In particular, this Circular gives effect to:

- Section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which guarantees everyone the immediately realisable and unconditional access to the right to a basic education.
- Section 28(2) of the Constitution, which provides that a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.
- The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), as amended.
- The Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS).
- Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.
- The Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act No. 4 of 2013) (POPIA), which permits the lawful processing and sharing of personal information where necessary for the performance of a public function, the exercise of official responsibilities, compliance with legal obligations, and the provision of educational support to learners.
- Any applicable professional ethical standards governing the various professions employed within Provincial Education Departments.

2.3 The purpose of professional assessment within the basic education sector is to support learning, teaching, participation, curriculum access and the provision of appropriate educational support. Professional assessments are, therefore, educational support tools and do not exist as ends in themselves, but to inform and facilitate the educational support required by learners.

2.4 Professional ethical obligations and confidentiality requirements must always be interpreted in the best interests of the child and in a manner that advances, and does not unjustifiably impede, the learner's constitutional right to basic education.

2.5 Accordingly, the unjustified refusal to share professional reports with authorised education officials, teachers or parents, or unreasonable delays in providing such reports where they are required for educational planning, learner support or placement, may impede the effective implementation of support and may amount to conduct that frustrates the realisation of a learner's constitutional right to basic education.

2.6 Similarly, professional assessments may never be used as a prerequisite for admission to a public school, nor may pending assessments or reports be used as a reason to delay or refuse the admission or placement of a learner. Learners must be admitted in accordance with applicable legislation and policy while any outstanding assessments or support planning processes continue.

3. Guiding Principles

3.1 The implementation of this Circular shall be guided by the following principles:

- Every learner has an immediate and unconditional right to basic education.
- Educational support must be organised around the learning and support needs of the learner.
- Professional services exist to support teaching, learning, assessment and participation.
- Inclusive education depends on professionals, educators and parents working together.
- Information should be shared with those who need it to support the learner's education.

- Confidentiality must protect learners without preventing appropriate educational support.
- Continuity of support must be maintained whenever learners transition between educational settings, specifically from community-based special care centres into schools.

4. Status of Professional Assessment Reports

4.1 Professional reports prepared by psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language therapists, social workers, counsellors, education specialists and other specialists employed within Provincial Education Departments for purposes of learner support shall be regarded as educational support documents.

4.2 Their purpose is to:

- identify, address and prevent barriers to learning and participation;
- inform curriculum differentiation and support;
- guide teaching strategies;
- support the development, implementation and management of Individual Support Plans (ISPs);
- inform support provisioning for learners;
- facilitate reasonable accommodation;
- support decisions in accordance with the Policy on SIAS ; and
- promote continuity of educational, therapeutic and psychosocial support.

4.3 Professional reports should, therefore, be written in language that enables educators, parents and support teams to implement the recommendations effectively.

5. Sharing of Professional Reports

5.1 Professional reports shall be shared, where relevant, with authorised persons directly involved in supporting the learner, including:

- parents or caregivers;
- principals;
- relevant class and subject teachers;
- education specialists;
- therapists responsible for providing support;
- officials responsible for placement, curriculum support and learner support services; and
- any other authorised official whose responsibilities require access to the information for educational purposes.

5.2 Reports shall be shared within a reasonable period, in accordance with applicable provincial guidelines and protocols, to ensure that educational support is implemented without unnecessary delay.

5.3 No specialist employed by a Provincial Education Department may withhold professional reports from authorised education personnel solely on the basis of professional confidentiality or POPIA where the information is required to plan, implement or monitor educational support for the learner.

6. Responsibilities of Specialist Professionals

6.1 Specialist professionals shall:

- conduct assessments that are educationally relevant and responsive to the learner's educational support needs;

- prepare comprehensive reports that include practical, curriculum-focused recommendations aligned with applicable basic education legislation, policies and prescripts;
- distinguish between clinical information and information that is necessary for educational planning, ensuring that educators and officials receive the information required to support the learner effectively;
- actively participate in multidisciplinary planning and collaborative problem-solving;
- contribute to the development, implementation and periodic review of Individual Support Plans (ISPs);
- explain assessment findings and recommended support strategies to officials, educators and parents in clear, accessible and educationally meaningful language;
- provide guidance to educators on implementing recommended support measures without transferring specialist professional responsibilities to educators;
- participate in case management, transition planning and follow-up meetings where required; and
- monitor, together with educators and relevant officials, the effectiveness of recommended interventions and revise support strategies where necessary.

7. Admission of Learners

7.1 Provincial Education Departments are reminded that no learner may be denied admission to a public school or have his or her admission delayed because:
- an assessment has not yet been conducted;
- a professional report is still outstanding;
- specialist recommendations are pending;
- therapy services have not yet commenced; or
- an Individual Support Plan has not yet been finalised.

7.2 Assessment and support planning are continuing educational processes that must occur alongside the learner's education and may not be used as barriers to access.

8. Continuity of Specialist Support

8.1 The placement of a learner in a public school shall not result in the interruption or withdrawal of specialist support that the learner requires.

8.2 Where learners transition from community-based special care centres into public schools, the specialist support previously provided to those learners shall continue following placement.

8.3 Accordingly, the following specialists shall continue providing the necessary support during and after the learner's transition:
- psychologists;
- occupational therapists;
- physiotherapists;
- speech-language therapists;
- education specialists; and
- any other specialist professionals supporting the learner.

8.4 The transfer of responsibility for educational support must, therefore, include the transfer of professional knowledge, intervention strategies, assistive devices and technologies where applicable, and ongoing specialist collaboration.

8.5 Where learners enter public schools directly from their homes or communities and have not previously received support through community-based special care centres, Provincial Education Departments shall ensure that appropriate multidisciplinary

support services are arranged without delay in accordance with the learner's identified learning and support needs in terms of the applicable prescripts.

9. Transition Process

9.1 Provincial Education Departments shall ensure that learner transitions include:

- a complete learner support file;
- all multidisciplinary assessment reports;
- completed SIAS documentation;
- an updated Individual Support Plan;
- transition planning meetings involving parents, educators, relevant officials and specialist professionals;
- formal handover of educational support information;
- follow-up case management meetings after placement; and
- ongoing monitoring of the learner's participation and progress.

10. Confidentiality

10.1 Professional confidentiality remains an important obligation.

10.2 However, confidentiality shall not be interpreted in a manner that prevents authorised education personnel from accessing information necessary to fulfil their professional responsibilities towards the learner.

10.3 All authorised recipients of professional reports remain responsible for protecting learners' personal information and ensuring that such information is used solely for legitimate educational purposes.

11. Responsibilities of Provincial Education Departments

11.1 Provincial Education Departments shall ensure that:

- multidisciplinary teams implement this Circular consistently;
- specialist services are organised to support schools and learners effectively;
- continuity of specialist support is maintained during learner transitions;
- educators receive appropriate guidance to implement recommendations contained in professional reports;
- support services are coordinated across schools, districts and specialist teams; and
- compliance with this Circular is monitored through existing support and accountability mechanisms.

11.2 Heads of Provincial Education Departments may issue provincial circulars, guidelines or standard operating procedures to contextualise the implementation of this Circular in accordance with provincial administrative arrangements, available resources and operational requirements.

11.3 However, such contextualisation shall not amend, diminish, contradict or undermine the principles, rights-based approach, minimum requirements or policy intent set out in this Circular.

11.4 Any provincial measures developed in response to this Circular must remain fully aligned with the constitutional, legislative and policy framework governing inclusive education and the national guidance issued by the Department of Basic Education.

12. Implementation

12.1 Heads of Provincial Education Departments are requested to communicate this Directive to all district offices, principals, educators, specialist professionals and officials responsible for learner support.

12.2 This Circular takes effect immediately upon its date of issue.

12.3 The Department of Basic Education expects all Provincial Education Departments to implement these provisions in a manner that advances the constitutional right to basic education and strengthens the implementation of inclusive education throughout the Republic of South Africa.

I thank you in anticipation of your continued cooperation and commitment to strengthening the sector's collective responsibility towards learners requiring additional support. Your leadership in ensuring the consistent implementation of this Circular will contribute significantly to safeguarding every learner's constitutional right to a basic education, as enshrined in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and to advancing the realisation of an inclusive education system that leaves no learner behind.

Yours sincerely,



MR HM MWELI
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
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