Media Statement
5 May 2020

Stigmatization of DCS Officials cannot be tolerated

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) strongly condemns scowling and stigmatisation of Correctional Services officials due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The situation is getting unpalatable, especially in the Eastern Cape, as DCS officials are subjected to inhumane treatment when visiting shops and other public places. This is abhorrent conduct of worst form and it has no space in the collective efforts of preventing the spread of Coronavirus.

We have noted with dismay behaviour of some shop owners who have denied our officials access to their outlet, even worse, members of the community are pointing fingers at the brown uniform and stigmatizing our officials.

Such treatment is negatively affecting our officials who render an essential service. It is demoralizing and unhealthy to a workforce that has to render corrections during this trying time. We condemn such behaviour in strongest possible terms and urge the public to desist from practicing behaviour that undermines all efforts in the fight against Covid-19.

There is sufficient public education on COVID-19 and there can be no excuse for stigmatization directed towards DCS officials.

The Department of Health and other partners continue to demystify confusion, anxiety and fear amongst the public. Attempts to associate COVID-19 to a particular workforce can only reverse the gains the country has achieved thus far.

DCS has been very transparent in its quest to inform South Africans about COVID-19 developments in correctional facilities. Daily reports are provided and this is complemented by activities or measures employed in terms of prevention, containment and treatment to those testing positive.

Stigma can only undermine social cohesion and encourage social isolation of certain groups. Today it is Correctional Services being marginalized and this could extend to other groups should this virulent behaviour be allowed to prevail.

Ends.

Issued by: Department of Correctional Services

Enquiries, Singabakho Nxumalo on 079 523 5794