

Covid-19 Affirms Corrections is a Noble Calling

A large background image showing a person in a full-body white protective suit and goggles, likely a health worker, in the foreground. In the background, Minister Lamola, wearing a brown uniform, is gesturing towards a group of people, including a man in a suit and tie, during a screening campaign launch in Johannesburg.

**Minister Lamola
launches screening
campaign at
Johannesburg**



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correctional services

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EDITORIAL

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Our Department of Correctional Services (DCS) staff must be applauded for their ongoing work during these challenging times.

Even at the worst of times, DCS officials go to work every day and often face dangerous situations when managing inmates in correctional facilities and offenders in the community. Now our staff are adapting to the new challenge of the coronavirus by keeping our correctional centres and community corrections offices safe from the disease, while also ensuring the smooth and safe running of our facilities – for which they must be complimented.

We will continue to support our nation's 38 000 correctional staff, who manage more than 160 000 inmates in custody in 243 correctional centres, as well as 70 000 parolees and probationers in communities, across the country.

It's been a tough few months for everyone in South Africa. All sectors in society have been impacted in some way by Covid-19. DCS staff have done a sterling job thus far in working through this global pandemic. As at 23 June 2020, DCS recorded

1 485 Covid-19 recoveries, of 457 officials and 1 028 inmates, translating to a recovery rate of 74%. The total number of active cases has reduced to 497, comprising 353 staff and 144 inmates.

As DCS, we commend our staff who have worked tirelessly to keep our country's corrections system safe and secure during this crisis while also preventing the rapid spread of Covid-19 in our correctional centres. We applaud the dedication, commitment and professionalism of our correctional officials throughout this unprecedented situation.

We hope South Africans will also join us in lauding our hard-working staff, whose good work often goes unseen by the public.

Through our personal and collective actions, we can continue to delay the rate of infection across DCS.

The power to defeat Covid-19 is in our hands!





Covid-19 stigmatisation of Correctional Services workers is irrational and demoralising

BY MINISTER RONALD LAMOLA

In these extraordinary times, the simple act of staying home has saved lives. Yet there are those on the front lines of the fight against Covid-19, who have reported for duty every day to keep our nation and our people safe.

The men and women of Correctional Services, like their counterparts in health, defence, police and the metro police have been our vanguard in this fight. Sadly, there have been a number of incidents where the Department of Correctional Services personnel have suffered stigma, most notably in public places. The stigma varies from members of the community pointing fingers at those wearing the brown uniform, to extreme cases where shop owners deny corrections officials access to their outlets. This state of affairs is simply untenable and cannot be allowed to continue. During this trying period for humanity, society throughout the world has pulled together in extraordinary ways. We have witnessed human solidarity across the globe, as nations and people reach out to help and support each other. This deadly virus has brought out the best in humanity and has shown us all that working

together for the greater good is the only way. It is, therefore, disheartening that those on the front lines are unfairly, and without justification singled out by the very communities that they are serving. It is demoralising and detrimental to the health and mental well-being of those who render essential services during this trying time. We realise that there is still fear among some members of the public around the coronavirus. However, such fear is irrational, especially given the massive public education campaign about the virus. Practising good hygiene and maintaining social distance is key to this fight, whether in a shopping mall or at a correctional facility. The idea by some that corrections facilities are hotbeds of infection is simply not true; in fact, it is a total fallacy. Our facilities are regularly sanitised and the appropriate disinfection protocols are in place. Health-care teams are on site, armed with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPEs),

which includes goggles, gloves, masks and gowns, rendering care services to distressed cases and monitoring those likely to develop acute respiratory challenges. Furthermore, we are working with the Department of Health and provinces to secure hospitals and healthcare centres where inmates could be transferred in case they require admissions.

Within correctional facilities, we are also ramping up social distancing practices. During meal times, our units or wings are divided in order to avoid a concentration of inmates and officials in open spaces.

The extraordinary protective and prevention measures we have put in place will, therefore, remain in force to keep our staff, inmates and the broader population safe. Regular health screening will continue, and we are continually improving our environmental and personal hygiene practices. The standard practice of providing all necessary PPEs will continue, along with sanitisation and decontamination interventions. Keeping our people safe is a priority and we strongly reject reports that inmates and officials are not protected against the virus. It is, however, a reality that as long as the virus continues to spread in populations, correctional centres, along with their local communities, will remain vulnerable. But this is the case in every facet of society; Covid-19 will continue to spread if we don't follow the rules. Attempts to associate Covid-19 with a particular workforce are irrational and will only reverse the gains the country has achieved thus far. What is indisputable, is that the virus stands as a clear and present danger to our nation, our people and our way of life. All of us have a role to play in preventing the spread. When out in public observe the social distancing rules, wear a mask and regularly wash your hands. This is not the time for pointing fingers; stigma can only undermine social cohesion and encourage social isolation of certain groups. We dare not allow this to happen, this is a fight for our very lives and our future. We need all hands on deck; those on the front lines are our shield and they will continue to keep us safe. ●

STIGMA- TISATION

due to Covid-19 pandemic

What is Social Stigma?

Social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease.

Such treatment can negatively affect those with the disease, as well as their caregivers, family, friends and communities. People who don't have the disease but share other characteristics with this group may also suffer from stigma.

Why is COVID-19 causing so much stigma?

The level of stigma associated with COVID-19 is based on three main factors: 1) it is a disease that is new and for which there are still many unknowns; 2) we are often afraid of the unknown; and 3) it is easy to associate that fear with 'others'.

What is the impact?

Stigma can undermine social cohesion and prompt possible social isolation of groups, which might contribute to a situation where the virus is more, not less, likely to spread. This can result in more severe health problems and difficulties controlling a disease outbreak.

Stigma can:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination;
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately; and
- Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviours.

How to address social stigma?

- The department is working with reputable stakeholders such as the Department of Health to build trust and bring reliable health services and advice into our facilities.
- Colleagues can play a supportive role by showing empathy with those affected, understanding the disease itself, and continue to adopt effective, practical measures to help keep themselves, their colleagues and loved ones safe.
- Colleagues are encouraged to create an environment in which the disease and its impact can be discussed and addressed openly, honestly and effectively.
- DCS continues to be transparent

and provides daily COVID-19 updates complemented by activities or measures employed in terms of prevention, containment and treatment to those testing positive.

Tips on how to avoid compounding, social stigma:

- Educate yourself about COVID-19 and support one another especially those diagnosed with the disease.
- Choose your words carefully when talking about coronavirus disease, certain words and language may have a negative meaning for people and fuel stigmatising attitudes.
- Use a 'people-first' language that respects and empowers people.
- Avoid negative reporting because it has the potential to influence how people suspected to have the new coronavirus (COVID-19), patients and their families and affected communities are perceived and treated. 🕒



DCS Health Care professional screens Minister Ronald Lamola at the Johannesburg Management Area.

Minister Lamola launches screening campaign at Johannesburg Management Area

BY TIYANI SAMBO

Minister Ronald Lamola announced the escalation of the Department's three-pronged prevention, containment and treatment plan, to minimize the impact of Covid-19 in Correctional Services, during his visit in April to Johannesburg Management Area.

These three strategic pillars underpin the Department's comprehensive plan to mitigate against the potential risk of an outbreak in the correctional environment. Flanked by the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla, Gauteng MEC of Health, Dr Bandile Masuku, and the Mayor of Johannesburg, Cllr Geoff Makhubo, Minister Lamola said that Correctional Services is scaling up Covid-19 preventative measures throughout its facilities across the country.

The Minister indicated that the

second pillar of the strategy, which is containment, has been activated following an official at East London Correctional Centre testing positive for Covid-19, after coming into contact with people who had previously travelled abroad.

He said that the Department is working closely with the Department of Health and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) to ensure compliance with prescribed health norms and standards. "Ongoing screenings are continuing throughout all cor-

rectional centres in the country, aimed at mitigating the spread of the coronavirus," the Minister said. Minister Lamola said the launch of the mass screening campaign is aimed at intensifying measures to avert transmission of the virus in our centres and to protect both officials and offenders.

National Commissioner Arthur Fraser assured the Minister and the nation that the Department



Female offender, Porsha Moore (45) who started serving her 15-year sentence in 2014 said officials of the Department are helping to educate inmates about Covid-19.

has adopted a proactive approach to mitigate against the risk of the virus entering and spreading in correctional facilities. He said the overarching plan of the Department is largely anchored on prevention.

Following a declaration of the national state of disaster by President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Department has implemented a number of stringent measures to protect its officials and inmates. In this regard, Minister Lamola highlighted some of the important directions gazetted to further this objective, including:

- Suspending sittings of correctional supervision and parole boards during the lockdown period, except under exceptional circumstances;
- Suspending the granting of day parole to sentenced offenders during the lockdown period;
- Limiting the transfer of inmates;
- Limiting the movement of inmates by utilizing the Audio Visual Remand Technology available in 43 of our correctional centres in the country, for postponement of cases; and



Dr Winnie Seaketso is part of a massive health education drive targeted at officials and inmates in all correctional facilities.

- Suspending visits to correctional centres.

The Minister also indicated that the Department will ramp up health education which will primarily be targeted at officials and inmates.

Deputy Minister Phaahla said the visit to the correctional centre will help Government to identify potential risks and map out mitigating strategies to minimize the threat posed by this pandemic to inmates and officials.

MEC Masuku flagged correctional centres as a high risk environment because they are densely populated and accommodates vulnerable categories of inmates with underlying health conditions such as HIV, tuberculosis and pregnant women.

Minister Lamola and his guests embarked on a tour of a number of correctional centres in the Management Area to see first-hand and evaluate the Department's state of readiness to implement prescribed health precautions and its preparedness to roll out mass screenings across the country.

A number of offenders commended the Department for the measures it has put in place to safeguard their health and wellness. Vuyo Ngaba (37) who has been at the centre for 18 years said the department is screening inmates and providing them with sanitizers. He indicated that the biggest challenge is overcrowding in communal cells, which makes it difficult to practice social distancing. 🗣️





Deputy Minister Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa (middle), National Commissioner Arthur Fraser (left) and Acting CDC Incarceration and Corrections Lucky Mthethwa (right) during a recent visit at the Durban Management Area.



Acting KwaZulu-Natal Regional Commissioner welcomes Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa, Commissioner Arthur Fraser and other Head Office senior managers during a recent Covid-19 visit.

Deputy Minister Nkosi Holomisa applauds DCS staff for their dedication against the coronavirus

BY THULANI MDLULI

Deputy Minister, Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa recently visited Durban and Pietermaritzburg Management Areas, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) region, to obtain first-hand information on measures to prevent the rapid spread of Covid-19.

The visit to KZN, for the second time since the lockdown, forms part of his monitoring and evaluation oversight of the department's progress against the pandemic.

Officials from the Covid-19 Regional Operations Centre (ROC) presented the fundamental preventive measures that have assisted the region to Nkosi Holomisa, National Commissioner Fraser and other senior managers from head office.

Effective involvement of the regional office in supporting management areas with all necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) has proved to be an effective strategy in the fight against the coronavirus in the region.

All correctional centre entry points, residential areas for officials within correctional facilities as well as other critical areas are regularly sanitised. Durban and Pietermaritzburg management areas produce cloth masks for offenders, for supply across the region. The good work-

ing relationship with the provincial Department of Health (DoH) has also assisted with effective and rapid mass screening and testing of officials and offenders.

A number of inmates and officials have received the flu vaccine, as part of further precautionary measures. In Durban, a quarantine site has been set up at Coastlands Hotel, with the assistance of DoH, where officials infected by the coronavirus may also be accommodated. All management areas have been encouraged to strengthen partnerships with DoH, as part of ensuring an effective and efficient response.

Information sharing and heightened awareness, through posters, pamphlets and other communication interventions, have helped the region to be alive to the new normal as a result of the virus.

National Commissioner Fraser said, KZN is an example of what is expected during this difficult situation and he commended the region for their dedication and commitment towards

preventing further spread of the coronavirus. The National Commissioner further highlighted other DCS measures, including the following, to the Deputy Minister:

- Approved Facilities Draft Master Plan towards the process of refining the department's structural challenges.
- Technology to be explored on how cell phone records may be accessed to eliminate smuggling in correctional centres.
- Security gang management to be reviewed.
- Shift pattern system to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Commissioner Fraser also challenged the region to explore other innovations.

Nkosi Holomisa concluded by applauding the role played by Commissioner Fraser, Acting Regional Commissioner James Smalberger and all DCS managers and staff across the country, especially during this trying time. He urged the regional management to come up with modification plans on how offender skills could be optimally utilised, in partnership with the Department of Public Works, for possible solutions in fast tracking projects in DCS. ●

On behalf of management and staff of DCS, we wish our Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa, a speedy recovery.

Nkosi Holomisa has tested positive for Coronavirus, and is taking all the necessary precautions towards a full recovery.



DCS National Commissioner Arthur Fraser

UBUNTU at the centre of all that we do

More than 100 days following the outbreak of the coronavirus in South Africa, our staff, at correctional facilities across the country, continue to provide an essential frontline service.

After months of the nation-wide lockdown, they are unceasingly making a difference to the lives and welfare of thousands of offenders and their loved ones. Correctional officials work under challenging and abnormal conditions and are faced with the daunting responsibility to rehabilitate those that society has rejected. On behalf of Department of Correctional Services (DCS) management at all levels, I want to honour you for your commitment,

compassion and resolve during this global crisis.

Our DCS healthcare professionals are doing an outstanding job keeping everyone in Correctional Services safe during these very difficult times. You are extraordinary, and we celebrate you. Your tireless work and dedication makes you all Heroes.

Sadly, so far, we have recorded 16 deaths of eight officials and eight inmates. We convey our heartfelt condolences to their families, and wish those recuperating a speedy

recovery. We are also glad that our Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa, is on his way to recovery.

Ubuntu should be at the centre of all that we do. Let's be kind, and support our colleagues infected with Covid-19 or under quarantine. We must intensify the fight against stigmatisation.

We can and must expect infections to rise. We must accept the reality, prepare for it and adapt to it. As DCS, the next phase of our response is as much about continuity as it is about change or innovation.

As the lockdown is gradually eased, life will slowly return. But it will not be life as we knew it before. We must therefore be prepared to continue to live with the coronavirus among us for some time. We must be prepared for a new reality in which the fight against Covid-19 becomes part of our daily existence. Our success in overcoming the virus will ultimately be determined by the changes we make through our daily actions.

Our Department has entered a new phase in the fight against the coronavirus, which calls for greater personal responsibility. Our actions will determine the fate of DCS.

We must continue to ensure that we protect ourselves and others. Let us work responsibly, and in a way that minimizes transmissions.

Remember hand washing is the first line of defence against rapid spread of the virus. Wear your face mask, sanitize and keep a safe distance from one another. Through consistently observing these basic practices, we will overcome this pandemic.

The coronavirus crisis will pass. But, for as long as it remains a threat to our lives, we must remain vigilant, diligent and responsible. Now, more than ever, it is the conduct of each of us that depends the fate of us all. Let us turn this adversity into opportunity.

Together, let's ensure that we emerge stronger, more resilient, and more united as we move DCS forward!



Social distancing observed during the session at Grootvlei Management Area.

Commissioner Fraser on the ground monitoring implementation of COVID-19 DCS National Mitigation Plan

BY NOBUNTU GANTANA AND KGOPOLELO JABANYANE

National Commissioner Mr Arthur Fraser and Chief Operations Commissioner Mr Mandla Mkabela have been crisscrossing the country to provide support at centre level, and monitor implementation of the COVID-19 DCS National Mitigation Plan.

The Plan has been escalated from the first pillar of Prevention to include Containment and Treatment and Promoting a Culture of Seeking Early Medical Attention.

Following the high number of COVID-19 infections in the Eastern Cape region, Commissioner Fraser was back at East London Correctional Centre to provide support to the region.

The Eastern Cape Region was the first region to record a positive case, and remains an epicentre of the disease in the Department of Correctional Services (DCS).

Speaking to the Regional Executive and management of East London Management Area, Commissioner Fraser highlighted the department's disaster management response plan which is designed to prevent, contain, disrupt and mitigate COVID-19 from spreading in the department's facilities and

administrative offices. "We cannot shy away from our responsibility," he said. He urged management to ensure the accuracy of information submitted, in order to help the department to develop precise mitigation plans.

The National Commissioner advised the Region to harden the perimeter fence and monitor the movement of officials, service providers as well as visitors of officials residing in the departmental staff quarters.

The Response Plan is aimed at providing a clear operational process that must be implemented in order to prevent, manage and recover from COVID-19. It is envisioned that the plan will result in full implementation of the guidelines for prevention, detection and response to suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Meanwhile Mr Fraser and Mr Mkabela also visited Grootvlei

"All officials should be subjected to daily screening and sanitising should also be conducted."

- National Commissioner,
Arthur Fraser



National Commissioner, Arthur Fraser urged managers to take responsibility and ensure the accuracy of information in order to help the department to develop precise mitigation plans.

Management Area, in the Free State and Northern Cape Region, to evaluate their state of readiness and strengthen measures to prevent the further spread of the virus in Correctional Services. The working visit was also aimed at establishing a common understanding to ensure uniformed reporting across all layers of the department.

Mr Mkabela indicated that, as top management, they are duty-bound to prevent the disease from entering and spreading in correctional facilities, and to implement appropriate interventions.

Commissioner Fraser spoke strongly against reports of isolated incidents of the smuggling of contraband into correctional centres, despite the suspension of visits of members of the public. He reiterated the need to prioritise prevention, to halt the spread of the coronavirus in Correctional Services. "All officials should be subjected to daily screening and sanitising should also be conducted," concluded Commissioner Fraser. ●



Newly appointed nurse, Ms Albertina Magano taking body temperature from one of the residents at Rooigrond.

Families of Rooigrond officials commend DCS for their inclusion in Covid-19 screening

BY MARCIA HLUNGWANI

Rooigrond Management Area, Limpopo/Mpumalanga/North West (LMN) Region, extended its mass screening campaign to the families of officials residing inside the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) premises.

Ms Desiree Melk, a nurse from Medium B sanitizing an elderly citizen who resides inside the Rooigrond Management Area.



On 27 May 2020, Health Care Manager, Mr Letsatsi Kerileng, together with Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) chairperson, Mr Ralph Dortley, led the mass screening campaign to Rooigrond residents. About 88 family members of officials working at Medium A and B, including children and the elderly, were screened. The aim is to ensure the wellbeing of everyone within the DCS precinct, especially those who do not get the opportunity to be screened daily like officials of the department. All screening information was accordingly captured on the specially designed Covid-19 DCS mobile application (app), to ensure reliable information and to enhance the department's risk-adjusted strategy.

"I also feel that it is necessary to screen residents as we are not getting screened anywhere else," said 20-year-old Lucinda Wessels whose father works at Maximum.

Roseline Swarts, a businesswoman who has been on lockdown since the pronouncement by President Cyril Ramaphosa, is now taking care of the children while her husband continues rendering services at Medium B. "I think the department has done a good job by coming and screening us here in our houses. We now understand more about this Covid-19, with all the information, through awareness and pamphlets, the department brought to us," she said.

The mass screening was carried out by the newly-appointed Medium B nurse, together with officials from Employee Health and Wellness and Security, to assist in preventing rapid spread of the pandemic with the hope to flatten the curve. The campaign was a resounding success, as residents continued to show up for the screening throughout the day and expressed their appreciation for all the DCS efforts.

According to Health Care, no worrying trends were identified as none of the screened Rooigrond residents displayed any related symptoms. The campaign also ensured that Covid-19 regulations are adhered to, especially social distancing.

The initiative is continuing to ensure the safety of all residents within DCS premises. ●

Klerksdorp screens officials as surrounding communities confirm positive cases

BY BUSISIWE SHIBAMBO

The campaign to curb the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities is being intensified at the Klerksdorp Management Area, as Aurum Institute conducted mass screening at the Area Commissioner's office and Community Corrections.

The Aurum Institute is a global leading healthcare organisation that has partnered with the National Department of Health to amplify the national Covid-19 response. The official roll-out of the mass screening and testing of officials and inmates in DCS was launched on 8 April 2020 by Minister

Ronald Lamola in Johannesburg Management Area. Following the launch, the process has been continued at other management areas throughout the country. Klerksdorp started with the screening of correctional officials on 23 April.

The practice of social distancing was observed during the screening process, as officials were permitted to enter the screen-

ing venue in small groups of four. Each member was assisted by a trained Covid-19 champion to source relevant information using a formulated set of questions to help identify high risk factors. Based on research, it is advisable that when a person is screened and they are found to have recently travelled to high risk countries or had a contact with a confirmed case, they should self-isolate and be referred for testing. The official launch of mass screenings, led by the Health MEC, Madoda Sambatha, has revealed COVID-19 positive cases in the district.

The screening process was deliberately fused with awareness on COVID-19, in the form of training and handing over of information flyers. Officials were encouraged to continue practicing good hygiene by regularly washing and sanitizing their hands. They were also advised to wear masks when in public spaces. Mass screening will continue in Klerksdorp to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in all facilities in the Management Area. ●



Head of Klerksdorp Correctional Centre, Mr Mthuthuzeli Kambi being screened by one of the Aurum Institute champions.



Eastern Cape Regional Commissioner Phiko Mbambo addresses officials in Amathole during his Covid-19 operational visit

"We need to keep our essential services functioning, while we also safeguard our health and protect our colleagues and offenders in our care."

- Eastern Cape Regional Commissioner, Mr Phiko Mbambo

Regional Commissioner Mbambo encouraged by Covid-19 recoveries

BY SIVUYISIWE MATANGA

Eastern Cape Regional Commissioner, Mr Phiko Mbambo says the number of Covid-19 recoveries is encouraging and he is confident that we can beat the coronavirus if we adhere to the prescribed measures.

As at 21 June 2020, the Eastern Cape region recorded 730 recoveries, of 615 inmates and 115 officials, which equates to a recovery rate of 77.58%. This brings the number of active cases to 207 (111 officials and 96 inmates), following 941 confirmed cases (226 officials and 715 inmates).

RC Mbambo said he is pleased with the number of recoveries, and welcomed back officials who reported for duty following their recovery. "These are trying times for all of us. We need to keep our

essential services functioning, while we also safeguard our health and protect our colleagues and offenders in our care," he said.

Mr. Mbambo highlighted that the Department is making a concerted effort not to expose officials to the virus by ensuring regular screening of staff and inmates, providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and raising awareness about health and safety protocols. He reminded officials to keep a safe distance from each other, sanitise, wear correct PPEs and inform their Supervisors when showing any Covid-19 symptoms.



Sister Nomathamsanqa Ncaca screening the Eastern Cape Regional Commissioner, Mr Phiko Mbambo before the operational visit in the Amathole Management Area.

Addressing officials at the Amathole Management Area, on 8 June 2020, the RC said, "I am aware that some officials are fearful for their lives, and DCS will continue to do everything possible to allay such fears. On the other hand, as correctional officials, our profession requires of us to do our part by going the extra mile in ensuring safe and secure custody."

Mr. Mbambo has been crisscrossing the region as part of his operational visits to create awareness and provide support to officials infected and affected by the coronavirus. The visits are aimed at ensuring adherence to, and strict implementation of, the DCS Risk-Adjusted Strategy as well as the Infection Control and Prevention (IPC) Guidelines across the province.

Mr Mbambo reiterated that we can beat the virus if we follow all the information and guidelines provided by the Department of Health. ●



National Commissioner, Mr Arthur Fraser and Justice Edwin Cameron, Inspecting Judge for the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services engage during a visit at Johannesburg Management Area, Gauteng Region

The mandate of JICS is to uphold and protect the rights of all inmates who are incarcerated. JICS is responsible for the independent oversight of the Department of Correctional Services and must report thereon to the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services and Parliament's Portfolio Committee.

Inspecting Judge visits Johannesburg Management Area

BY AMUKELANI MAVASA

Inspecting Judge for the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), Justice Edwin Cameron, accompanied by JICS officials, visited Johannesburg Management Area.

The visit forms part of the monitoring and oversight of correctional facilities, particularly in the time of the coronavirus.

Justice Cameron was received by National Commissioner Mr Arthur Fraser, Chief Operations Commissioner Mr Mandla Mkabela as well as other senior managers.

As part of the briefing to the Inspecting Judge, Johannesburg Area Commissioner Mr Luckyboy Mathiba presented an overview of the Management Area which entailed information pertaining to the inmate population and accommodation. Mr Mathiba highlighted challenges relating to overcrowding, and how the management area

was coping under such conditions. The Area Commissioner explained in detail plans being implemented in the Management Area in terms of awareness, screening and testing for Covid-19. Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) was one of the issues also accentuated, and it was indicated that sanitizers, masks and gloves were available and provided to Heads of Centres and various components for distribution in relevant areas.

The Inspecting Judge was later taken to Medium A Correctional Centre, housing male remand detainees, where he got to see first-hand the condition of the facility and was also able to interact with inmates. Justice Cameron

encouraged officials to continue doing their best during this time to curb the rapid spread of Covid-19 in correctional facilities, with the limited resources available. He emphasised that, effective and humane incarceration of inmates, as well as rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders, is of paramount importance at all times. The Inspecting Judge advised management to come up with mitigation plans that will help to overcome challenges encountered in correctional facilities during this difficult time and going forward. He is expected to report his findings to Minister Ronald Lamola and National Commissioner Fraser.

Justice Cameron is a retired Judge of the Constitutional Court, and was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa as Inspecting Judge of JICS for a three-year term with effect from 1 January 2020. ●



Four homeless gentlemen show gratitude to DCS officials from Leeuwkop Management Area who provided them food parcels

Leeuwkop officials demonstrate compassion to the homeless

BY MONA COETZEE

DCS officials from Leeuwkop Management Area refuse to turn a blind eye to the plight of the homeless in their vicinity.

About 20 individuals were spotted squatting opposite Eskom Megawatt Park, in Woodmead, sleeping in temporary structures made of plastic to shield themselves from the cold and without food. In response, officials from Leeuwkop took time to visit the locality.

Glenrose Mthethwa, Head of Human Resource at Leeuwkop Medium C, said, this was a small contribution by DCS officials, bearing in mind the effect of the coronavirus globally but mostly on vulnerable people such as those who have no homes.

"We came to share what we can with them and remind them that

God still loves them and that they are in our thoughts and prayers," said Mthethwa. As a group of officials, we decided to collect cash to



Ms Glenrose Mthethwa explains the importance of wearing a mask and social distancing to the homeless men who received food parcels



Before handing the food parcels, officials sanitized the hands of the recipients, gave them masks and emphasized the importance of wearing masks in public

purchase basic food items. "May it bring comfort to them as small as it might seem," she said.

Officials from Leeuwkop normally see this group of homeless men on their way to work, and got together and thought of a way to make a difference in their lives. Two of the homeless men took turns to thank the officials saying that, they are really happy that people still care about people like them.

Before handing the food parcels, the officials also sanitized the hands of the recipients and gave them masks as they emphasized the importance of wearing a mask and social distancing as part of the protective measures against the spread of Covid-19. ●



Acting Area Commissioner, Director Chiya Wabane and managers from Supply Chain during the COVID-19 screening.

Mass screening and testing at Pollsmoor

BY LEWIES DAVIDS

Pollsmoor Management embarks on mass screening and testing, with the venue for the screening and testing aptly named “Empilisweni” (place of healing).

Following the appointment of eight nurses on 4 May 2020, management at Pollsmoor moved swiftly to implement measures to prevent a rapid spread of COVID-19. Pollsmoor managed to admit its first COVID-19 positive inmate, who was transferred from Worcester Female to Pollsmoor on 21 April 2020.

From the outset, there were lingering fears that Pollsmoor would be more susceptible to COVID-19, given the size of its inmate population coupled with the significant number of frequent visitors who check on their friends and family members incarcerated at the centre. The situation at Pollsmoor is fur-

ther affirmation of the efficacy of the Department’s National Disaster Management Strategy.

COVID-19 Treatment Site

The COVID-19 Management Task Team in Pollsmoor are working round-the-clock to prevent further spread of the virus. This effort was initiated with full vigour even before the national lockdown was announced. The Task Team set up a 300-bed facility, known as the COVID-19 Treatment Site for inmates of the Western Cape region. A section of Medium A Correctional Centre has been converted into an isolation treatment site, which will complement the hospital capacity. In



Manager Health Care Services, Mr Lucky Hlophe and Mr Owen Kau in the back row with newly appointed nurses.

addition, six park homes with ablution facilities were set up to cater for the overflow of COVID-19 positive inmates (mild cases).

The site has a separate entrance and is totally isolated from the rest of the inmate population. It is also restricted, and only accessible to COVID-19 positive patients and dedicated personnel adhering to strict quarantine protocols including using the desired personal protective equipment (PPE’s) where needed. Management is proud of the cooperation amongst officials taking up duties at the treatment site.



Management with staff from Hope Prison Ministry during testing and screening.

Preventative Measures

The screening and testing of officials and inmates is ongoing, and measures are in place to provide support to those who may test positive for COVID-19. Testing was also conducted on residents within DCS premises. Prevention measures will continue to be intensified. The management of Pollsmoor would like to wish all Departmental officials who have tested positive a speedy recovery, and pledges its ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of inmates and officials. ●



Rustenburg Area Commissioner Mamokete Mogorosi briefing North West Premier, Prof Job Mokgoro and MEC of Social Development, MEC Botumelo Moiloa.



Centre Coordinator Corrections, Dorcas Dinoko briefing the Premier during the visit of the facility.

North West Premier visits Rustenburg Correctional Centre

ADVICE RAMONNYE

North West Premier, Prof Job Mokgoro, accompanied by MEC for Social Development, Ms Boitumelo Moiloa, visited Rustenburg Correctional Centre.

The visit forms part of the North West provincial government outreach programme to ascertain the COVID-19 state of readiness by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in the province.

Area Commissioner of Rustenburg Management Area, Ms Mamokete Mogorosi, joined by her executive and officials from the Limpopo/Mpumalanga/North West (LMN) regional office, outlined the measures put in place by the Department to prevent and contain the spread of COVID 19 in correctional centres.

Premier Mokgoro was satisfied with the plans presented, and



Seated: Premier Job Mokgoro and Social Development MEC Boitumelo Moiloa, flanked by Area Commissioner Mamokete Mogorosi and Regional Head Development and Care Kgwadu Mohale. Standing behind are other DCS officials.

wanted to know about the mood of inmates during this period. Ms. Mogorosi indicated that the mood is calm, although a section of the inmate population is discontented about the temporary suspension of



Head of Medium A Correctional Centre, Nicholas Mashego briefing the Premier and MEC on the measures put in place to protect inmates and officials.

visitations. The Area Commissioner also shared with the Premier and MEC that the inmates are concerned that they may be infected by officials who go out to the community and return to the centre. However, such concerns are being addressed as best as possible.

Following the presentation, the Premier and his entourage visited the centre where they saw first-hand the various COVID-19 measures including the mobile testing clinic, screening site for inmates, identified quarantine unit to house symptomatic inmates, the centre hospital as well as the remand detention unit. ●



A selfie moment with the MOC members performing their daily duties at the Thohoyandou Management Area.

Thohoyandou used as benchmark for innovation and accurate reporting

BY THENDO MARINDILI

Thohoyandou Management Area Operations Centre (MOC) team, part of the Limpopo/Mpumalanga and North West (LMN) Region, is employing various innovative strategies to collect, analyse and integrate data for submission of daily management area reports to the Regional Operations Centre (ROC).

The MOC team, comprising 14 dedicated DCS men and women, have been working tirelessly during the Covid-19 lockdown to ensure reporting of accurate and reliable information. Led by Ms. Thilingiwi Ramovha, the team consolidates, monitors, evaluates and validates various reports, received from centres, community corrections offices and the area commis-

sioner's office, prior to submission. Ms. Ramovha alluded to how dedication and commitment of team members has contributed towards accurate and timeous reports.

MOC Coordinator, Ms. Livhuwani Muthumuni explained that her job was to manage day-to-day operations and also ensure that the team adheres to stipulated deadlines for allocated tasks. Reporting to the Area Commissioner and liaising

"I am impressed with the way screening is conducted at the gate, and the measures put in place to prevent coronavirus infections."

- Mr Mandla Mkabela,
Chief Operations Commissioner

with the ROC, Ms. Muthumuni delightedly highlighted that, although the team encounters certain minor glitches, nothing hinders them from excellence in service delivery.

Chief Operations Commissioner (COC) Mandla Mkabela, accompanied by acting LMN Deputy Regional Commissioner Takalani Mashamba, undertook an operational visit to Thohoyandou recently to monitor and evaluate its preparedness in the fight against the coronavirus. Mr Mkabela commended Area Commissioner Solly Netshivhazwaulu for coming up with such innovation, and providing enough room for creativity in the MOC. "I am impressed with the way screening is conducted at the gate, and the measures put in place to prevent coronavirus infections," said the COC.



COC Mandla Mkabela and Acting DRC Takalani Mashamba with the Thohoyandou MOC members during the visit

The team's outstanding performance has gained them much attention, and resulted in visits by other management areas including Johannesburg, Bethal and Polokwane. ●



Mr Simon Segale facilitates the work of his team, 16 offenders and five (5) officials at the Boksburg textile workshop as they produce three ply masks for offenders and officials.



Acting Head of the Production Workshop in Boksburg, Mr Frans Masoga demonstrates how to use the hand sanitizer stand manufactured at the Boksburg workshop.

Boksburg Management Area fights the spread of the coronavirus

BY SELLO MODISE

In heeding the call by Minister Ronald Lamola for correctional facilities to produce cloth face masks in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, Boksburg Management Area has produced thousands of masks.

Towards prevention of the rapid spread of the virus inside correctional centres, Boksburg production workshop, textile division team of 16 offenders and five (5) officials headed by Mr. Simon Segale, started mass production of cloth face masks on 15 April 2020. The masks have been delivered to various centres.

The workshop produces 500 units a day, of three ply fabric face masks, as per specifications of the Depart-

ment of Health. "The masks are also washable and our plan is to produce two masks per inmate and later expand the production towards other management areas," said Segale.

Sewing machines and work stations are disinfected daily with sanitizers, and officials ensure that inmates observe social distancing and other precautionary measures.

Zwelakhe Petrus Mgidi, who is serving 12 years' imprisonment for arson and attempted murder, said he is honoured to be part of

a team of inmates who are serving the country and making a positive contribution towards the fight against the spread of the coronavirus inside correctional centres. He said the production of masks will ensure that offenders are safe. "We always observe the safety protocols every morning by washing our hands and disinfecting and sanitizing our machines and work stations before we start working," said Mgidi.

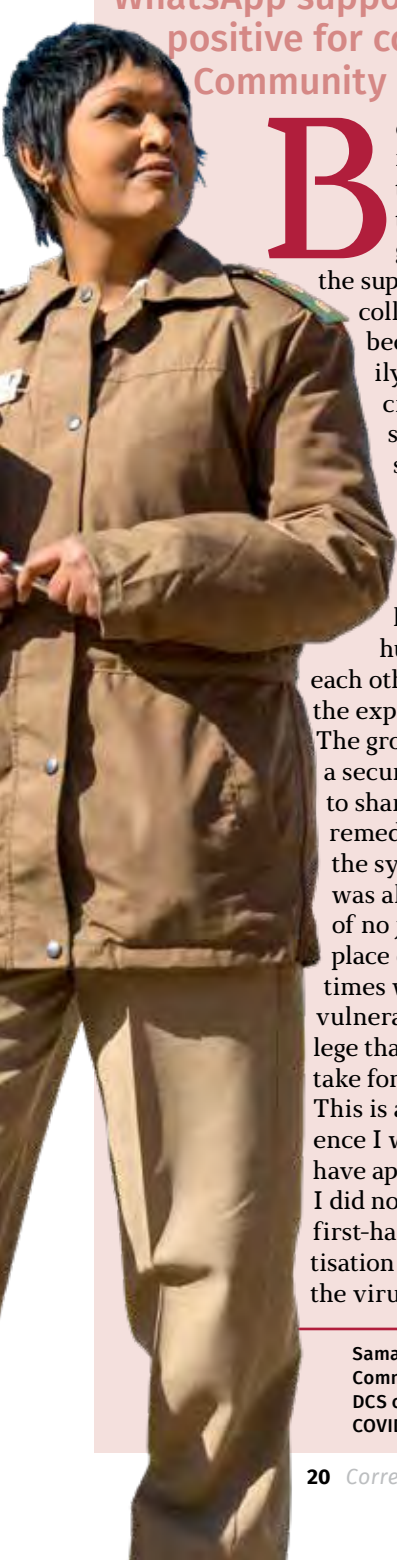
The Management Area also roped in Leribe Training Solutions, a service provider that offers offenders accredited skills development training programmes in clothing manufacturing and crafting of furniture. Twenty (20) offenders received training on the clothing manufacturing programme. They will utilize their skills in reinforcing the mass production of masks for inmates, and their goal is to produce cloth face masks for officials as well.

Through their creativity, the production workshop team also manufactured a hand sanitizing dispenser that operates with a foot peddle. Each individual simply places their foot on the peddle, and the sanitizer is activated. This initiative prevents one from touching the sanitizer bottle by hand. This is another way to help prevent the spread of the virus inside a correctional facility. ●

Case number 19: I tested positive for COVID-19

BY SAMANTHA RAMSEWAKI

Case number 19 is a code name I was given on the day I became the nineteenth member of a WhatsApp support group for officials who tested positive for coronavirus at Johannesburg Community Corrections.



Believe it or not, one of the things that kept me going was the support from colleagues who became a family of common circumstance on a social media platform. Every day, the blow became lighter as we humoured each other through the experience. The group became a secure space to share natural remedies to treat the symptoms. It was also a place of no judgement, a place of safety for times when we felt vulnerable, a privilege that we usually take for granted. This is an experience I wouldn't have appreciated if I did not experience first-hand stigmatisation because of the virus.

My name is Samantha Ramsewaki, I am a Community Liaison Manager at Johannesburg Management Area and my test results confirmed me COVID-19 positive on 06 June 2020. My symptoms were ranging from a runny nose, chesty coughs, nasal congestion, blood clots, and shortness of breath, but in my case they began to wane soon after my first test. I live with my only daughter who is doing her last year at university. As parents, we all naturally fear more for our loved ones, but fortunately for her, she tested negative.

About 24 officials have tested positive in our component and only two cases were hospitalised. Coronavirus became more than just headlines that we heard about on the news networks, when the first positive case was revealed at Johannesburg Community Corrections office on 27 May 2020 - it suddenly became reality.

Officials were subjected to testing by the Department of Health. That day made us realise that no amount of planning prepares you for such news. All levels of preparedness on infection control strategies and reporting somehow felt far less important than the unknown we were to face ahead. During the agonising waiting period, we fought against anxiety and fear as we switched into survival mode in case the results didn't turn out in our favour.

The WhatsApp group became an invaluable coping mechanism fol-

lowing the devastation upon learning that most of us had tested positive for COVID-19. However, as time progressed, there was a sense of victory as more recoveries than positive cases were being recorded. Besides the support group, I found love in the conversations with the people who reached out to me, friends and colleagues like the Woldaardts' family who ran my errands and did my grocery shopping. I owe my healing to those who reached out to me when I was in quarantine.

These much needed human connections amongst the DCS community during this difficult time are a reminder that many in the coalface create the magic that finds daily resolve in working environments that were strained long before COVID-19 pitched at our doorsteps.

I returned to work on 22 June 2020 following a medical assessment and lung function test. The good news is that the number of officials who have recovered from this vicious disease is rapidly increasing in our component. Luckily, many of us did not experience severe symptoms and we hope that the rest will be with us soon.

Obviously, we are not out of the woods yet as the country eases the lockdown regulations further, which requires us to take responsibility and be more careful. From child to adult, phrases such as social distancing, cloth mask or sanitizers are probably the most widely uttered words during this time. In fact, their meaning is so substantial, that they are our means of survival. These precautions may be simple but they have kept us safe for this long until of course that one unfortunate event when the opportunistic virus hosted itself in our bodies. We continue to be cautious to protect ourselves and others in the workplace.

The stigma explosion attached to COVID-19 is a reflection of ignorance in our society. Through this experience, I have learnt that compassion and kind gestures can help us all survive during this trying time. Although it will take time to change the attitude of the entire society outside DCS, the least we can do as DCS officials is to support one another. ●

Samantha Ramsewaki, a Community Liaison Manager at Johannesburg Community Corrections, says although it will take time to change society, DCS correctional officials have the power to end stigmatisation due to COVID-19 amongst themselves.


WE ARE ONE!



How can I help my colleagues in quarantine?

1. Give them a call.
2. Offer to deliver groceries or run errands for them.
3. Send them a virtual get-well-soon card.
4. Offer a home-cooked meal or a special treat from their favourite store.
5. Make them feel needed and valued.

**COVID-19 doesn't discriminate.
Neither should we.**



Smoking associated with adverse outcomes of Covid-19

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), tobacco use is one of the biggest public health threats, the world has ever faced, killing more than 8 million people a year across the globe.

More than 7 million of those deaths are as a result of direct tobacco use, while around 1.2 million are as a result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.

Long before Covid-19, there have been respiratory system diseases, linked to smoking, such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Emphysema, Chronic Bronchitis and Asthma.

Smoking is associated with the negative progression, and adverse outcomes of Covid-19. Clinical studies conducted in China reveal that the majority of patients, who had severe symptoms or who died because of the virus, were current and former smokers. History of smoking is identified as a factor that led to the progress of Covid-19 pneumonia.

While studies are still being conducted on how Covid-19 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer and

diabetes), including smokers, are most likely to develop severe illness after contracting the virus.

Although anyone is at risk of contracting the coronavirus, catching it does not automatically put you at a disadvantage of developing a serious illness or dying from it. However, smokers are at risk of being severely affected by Covid-19. According to WHO, any kind of tobacco smoking is harmful to bodily systems including the cardiovascular and respiratory systems which are also attacked by coronavirus.

The coronavirus gets into the body through the mucous membrane of the mouth, eyes and nose. The virus then infects the upper and lower respiratory tracts. It travels down the airways, irritating the respiratory tract, and causing inflammation. The immune system fights back, and the lungs and airways become inflamed.

The toxins found in tobacco weaken the body's ability to fight diseases. The act of smoking itself (touching the mouth with the hand) goes

against the practice of good hygiene, aimed at stopping the spread of the virus. This also includes the smokers' habits of sharing the water-pipes, or hubblies, which may lead to the spread of coronavirus.

Science proves that second hand smoke is just as dangerous to those exposed to it. Second-hand smoke is the smoke that fills restaurants, offices or other enclosed spaces when people burn tobacco products such as cigarettes, bidis and water-pipes. There are more than 7 000 chemicals in tobacco smoke, of which at least 250 are known to be harmful and at least 69 are known to cause cancer.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. In adults, second-hand smoke causes serious cardiovascular and respiratory diseases including coronary heart disease and lung cancer. In infants, it raises the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. In pregnant women, it causes pregnancy complications and low birth weight. ●

Source: WHO and SAMRC – advancinglife

Stop smoking and reduce the spread of Covid-19

Warning

The act of smoking which involves fingers in contact with lips and sharing smoking products increase the transmission of COVID-19.

Did you know?

- Smokers with COVID-19 are more at risk of getting severe symptoms than non-smokers.
- Smoking puts you at higher risk of serious lung conditions such as Covid-19 pneumonia.
- Tobacco kills more than 8 million people globally every year.

Save lives and stop smoking.

- 1.2 million people who are non-smokers die as a result of being exposed to second-hand smoke.
- Non-smokers exposed to tobacco smoke inhale harmful chemicals known to cause cancer.



**STOP
SMOKING**



Zonderwater Recreation Club receives their well-designed and thick layered washable masks from the supplier

The masks will be distributed within the management area and Zonderwater College.



Zonderwater Recreation club members showing off the facemasks that the club donated to the management area and Zonderwater College.

care of its constituency,” said Lekgau. This good gesture will ensure that the management area has more than enough personal protective equipment (PPEs) over a period of time. The well-designed and thick layered washable masks can last for up to six months according to the suppliers.

The masks will be distributed within the management area and Zonderwater College. Officials were delighted to receive the facemasks, and applauded the care shown by the club. ☺

Zonderwater Area Commissioner, Mr Nico Baloyi extends words of gratitude on behalf of the management area for the initiative and empathy shown by the Zonderwater Recreation Club

Zonderwater Recreation Club donates facemasks to officials and offenders

BY MASHUDU MUTAMBA

In a clear demonstration of compassion for others, Zonderwater Recreation Club, Gauteng Region, has donated 1 147 facemasks to officials and offenders working at the club’ service points.

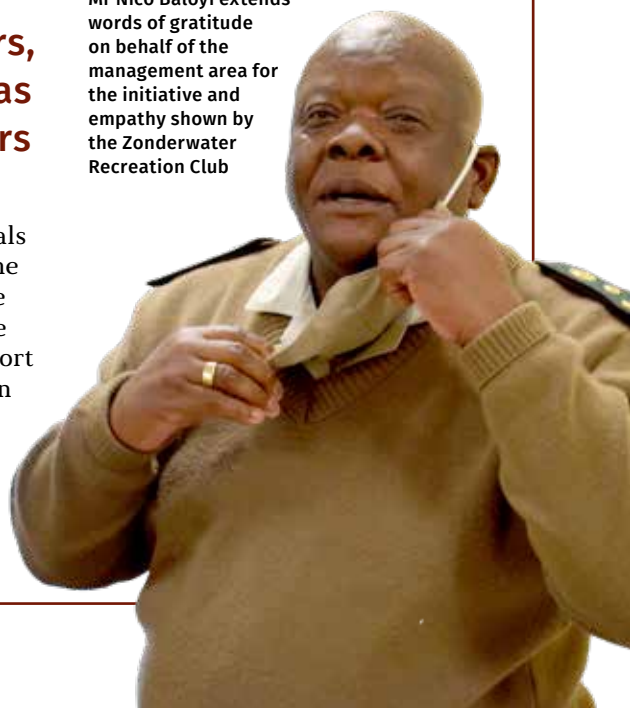
The recreation club comprises officials who make monthly contributions with the aim of promoting teamwork, and also provides certain financial assistance to officials participating in different types of events, in the management area.

Area Commissioner, Nico Baloyi commended the initiative and empathy shown by the club to ensure that

the health and wellness of officials is not compromised in fighting the coronavirus. He also thanked the suppliers for their swift response in delivering the facemasks at short notice despite the high demand in the market.

Special Programmes and Club Manager, Jacob Lekgau alluded to the responsibility of the club for the wellness of officials.

“The Club felt the need to take





KZN acting Regional Commissioner, Mr James Smalberger and his delegation from the regional office inspect the quarantine site at Estcourt Correctional Centre.

Estcourt ready in the fight against Covid-19

BY KHETHO KHUZWAYO

The newly built state-of-the-art correctional facility in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) region, will temporarily be used to house inmates suspected of having Covid-19 in the region.

KZN acting Regional Commissioner, Mr James Smalberger visited Estcourt, on International Nurses Day, 12 May 2020, to inspect the quarantine site and ensure that it is prepared and ready.

Mr. Smalberger encouraged the regional Covid-19 response teams to continue with their hard work, and also commended nurses for their dedication and commitment.

The Regional Health Coordinator, Mr King Khumalo, who was part of the regional commissioner's delegation, also addressed officials at Estcourt about Covid-19 protocols, and emphasized the importance of the use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). Officials were also shown how to properly use PPE items, such as the correct handling of disposable face masks and hand gloves. Staff residences and cars are continuously disinfected to



One of the professional nurses at Estcourt demonstrates how to safely use a disposable facemask.

keep the centre safe from contamination.

DCS officials are encouraged to wear their masks at all times, wash their hands regularly and maintain a safe social distance.

Healthcare staff are working tirelessly empowering correctional officials on COVID-19.

DCS salutes all officials for acting responsibly. 🇿🇦



DCS officials from Vryburg Community Corrections prepare food to be served to destitute community members.

Vryburg Community Corrections shines ubuntu during lockdown

BY YOLANDE HARTNIK

More than 1 200 senior citizens and children residing in Monoto Moesha, and nearby informal settlements, were fed with bread and soup.

Officials from Vryburg Community Corrections put their money where their mouth is to feed destitute members of their community.

Vryburg Community Corrections, partnered with the Hunger Relief Programme, on a campaign to help feed community members at the Methodist Church in Colridge, Vryburg. The Hunger Relief Programme is a campaign that was established by 15 members of the local community, to extend a helping hand by feeding those in the Colridge community who have been affected by the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Seven officials from Vryburg Community Corrections office each contributed an amount of R50, amounting to R350, to buy 15 loaves of bread and ingredients for making



Hunger Relief Programme members, together with an official from Community Corrections, chopping vegetables.

soup. The office was represented by four officials, seven parolees and three probationers. They assisted by cleaning and preparing vegetables and cooking soup.

More than 1 200 senior citizens and children residing in Monoto Moesha, and nearby informal settlements, were fed with bread and soup. Those involved in the project were issued with the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and social distancing was adhered to at all times.

Mr Van Den Heever, leader of the campaign, thanked DCS officials, parolees and probationers for assisting in making the initiative a huge success. He encouraged the members to never stop caring for those in need, and also expressed his gratitude towards the Department for their involvement in the upliftment of the community. ●

Inmates thank DCS for prioritising their well-being during Covid-19

BY REFILOE TAU

Inmates at Bizzah Makhate Management Area, in the Free State/Northern Cape Region, have thanked DCS for ensuring that their wellbeing is a priority in the current coronavirus pandemic.

Offenders commended DCS officials for keeping them updated with information on Covid-19, and working in the interests of their health and safety.

Area Commissioner (AC) of Bizzah Makhate Management Area, Jacob Mbele has confirmed screening for officials and inmates is on-going in all 14 correctional facilities in the management area. He said that staff are screened and sanitised every day when they report for duty.

AC Mbele alluded to their partnership with the Department of Health



Ms Nono Sello welcoming Department of Health officials to Odendaalsrus Remand Detention Centre.

to ensure proper screening.

Odendaalsrus correctional facility detains over 740 persons who are not yet sentenced, most of whom are foreign nationals working in the mining sector. "When they arrive at the centre, some of them display flu-like symptoms. To confirm that



Remand detainees observing social distancing during screening and testing.

these are not Covid-19 symptoms, the management area, together with the Department of Health, embarked on a mass screening and testing campaign in order to ensure that the correct measures are taken while it is still early," said Mbele.

Detainees are also tested for blood pressure, sugar levels and TB. AC Mbele said that each centre has isolation sites, and a quarantine site has been set up at Kroonstad Medium B. 📧



Acting Health Services Manager at Odendaalsrus Remand Centre, Ms Thakane Letele briefing detainees before the screening and testing process.



Inmates at Helderstroom Medium Correctional Centre have expressed deep gratitude to the officials for ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

COVID-19 AFFIRMS CORRECTIONS IS A NOBLE CALLING

BY MOSELE SEHLOHO

The outbreak of the coronavirus has thrust essential services, including the corrections profession, into the spotlight as the first line of defence.

By design, correctional facilities are easily susceptible to becoming incubators of Covid-19. Hence, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has put in place stringent measures to contain the rapid spread of the virus. Men and women in our correctional centres found themselves having to quickly adapt and transform by ensuring speedy implementation of decisions taken at regular meetings of the National Disaster Management Response Team (DMRT). Monitoring and evaluation visits to correctional facilities are undertaken, to confirm progress at the coalface as the situation evolves.

Across the country, gallant correctional officials continue to demonstrate their bravery and patriotism daily by responding to the higher calling of venturing into unchar-

tered and treacherous territories to confront this invisible enemy head-on. The global coronavirus pandemic has brought other harsh realities to the fore. Many have often described corrections as a thankless job, due to the real dangers that our men and women in brown are confronted with every day. Yet, the army of correctional officials has remained resolute and continue to execute their duties of correcting inmates' deviant behaviour with absolute diligence and dedication. This has confirmed the profession of corrections as a noble calling.

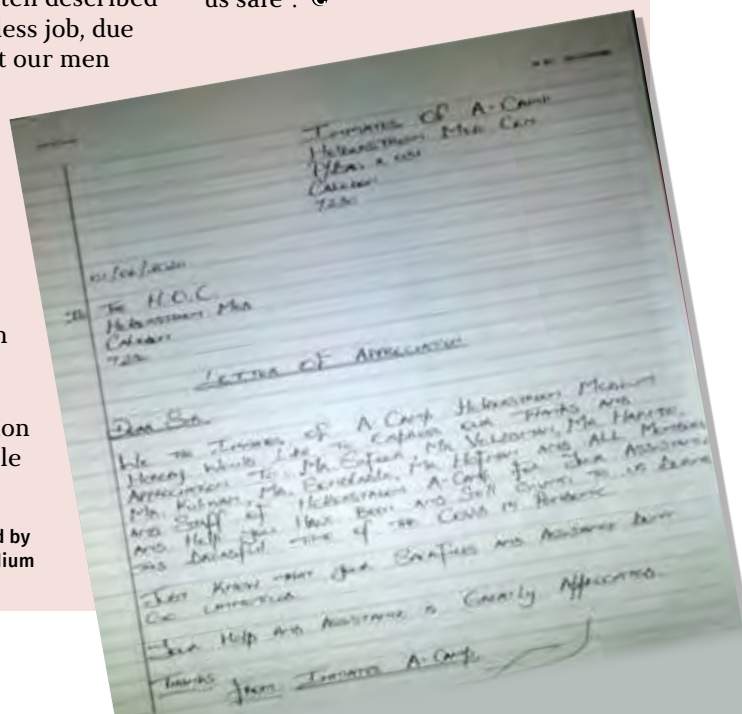
Letter of appreciation penned by inmates at Helderstroom Medium Correctional Centre

At Helderstroom Medium Correctional Centre, Western Cape Region, little did officials notice that inmates were carefully observing them implementing various protocols to curtail the spread of the virus. Hygiene practices were introduced and all offenders were accordingly inducted, to ensure compliance with health and safety protocols. Wearing of masks, hand-washing and sanitisation has become the norm, thanks to cooperation of inmates. Offenders have been observing and learning hygiene practices from officials, and have ultimately developed a good comprehension of Covid-19 measures that must be adhered to. Inmates from Helderstroom Medium Correctional Centre, A Camp, decided to pen a letter of appreciation to officials, to thank them for their selfless sacrifice to keep offenders safe.

Through their letter, inmates expressed gratitude to officials working in "The forgotten or unnoticed essential service department" - as many in DCS say.

Offenders said, they are inspired by men and women in Correctional Services, who like their counterparts in Health, Defence, SAPS and Metro Police, are playing a huge role in the fight against the coronavirus.

As our Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Ronald Lamola said: "We need all hands on deck; those on the front lines are our shield and they will continue to keep us safe".





Block 3 section correctional officials and offenders join hands in the fight against Covid-19.

Modderbee Block 3 section takes lead in fighting the spread of Covid-19

BY OLIVIA MOTHAPO

Casper Madihlaba, an inmate at Block 3 section in Modderbee Correctional Facility, together with his fellow offenders decided to use what they have to produce face masks to protect themselves and others against the spread of the vicious Covid-19.

Out of torn prison fitted sheets and shoe laces, four offenders produced 30 cloth face masks a day using their own hands. “We cannot fold our arms and wait for Government to provide us with all the resources. We are using what we have at our disposal to combat the spread

of the virus, and to maintain stability and environmental hygiene in our correctional facility,” said Madihlaba. This foursome trained, and polished their sewing skills, at the Modderbee Skills Development Centre.

Kagiso Boshalelo, who is also part of the group, is determined to transfer his knowledge to other

offenders for a larger production of masks that will be given to all inmates at the Modderbee facility. They aim to also reach out to the most vulnerable offenders, those who have underlying conditions and the elderly to prevent them from the risk of contracting the virus. Boshalelo said that they make sure that all masks are washed every day before sleeping time.

Like all South Africans, the announcement of the national lockdown and suspension of visits to correctional centres created uncertainty amongst offenders. Offenders depend on their families for specific items such as additional toiletries including moral support, and, especially for those who are studying, the interruption was unpleasant.

Effective communication and open dialogue to create clear understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic helped the inmates to quickly adjust to the new expectations. Officials were proactive in creating a supportive environment for offenders and their families, to avoid anxiety and possible unrest inside the centres.

Mr Vusi Sibanyoni, an official at Block 3 section, took the initiative >

to buy a world call card for R150 to assist 66 offenders in his section to each make a three-minute telephone call to their families. The call was meant to give offenders an opportunity to assure their loved ones that they were doing well, and make them understand the reasons behind the suspension of visits in correctional facilities. "My colleagues and I commit to supporting offenders to the best of our ability, to assist with rehabilitation, especially during this challenging time and help combat the spread of Covid-19," said Sibanyoni.

Officials and offenders are grateful for the support provided by the area management, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and the National Health Laboratories for screening and testing. The facility has also been decontaminated. Block 3 section is determined to support DCS in fighting the pandemic and sharing their best practices.

DCS needs every individual to help this process. ●

Daniel Mokoena crafts a cloth facemask by hand, he aims to produce ten masks daily.



Officials screened by health care workers during the Zonderwater Management Area screening and testing campaign.

Appointment of more nurses enhances fight against Covid-19 at Zonderwater

BY MASHUDU MUTAMBA

The appointment of four (4) new nurses at Zonderwater Management Area, Gauteng Region, has helped to enhance healthcare in the fight against the deadly coronavirus.

With the main focus on chronic conditions and those who are sixty (60) years and above, Zonderwater has screened and tested inmates. Officials have also been screened, as part of the DCS mass screening and testing campaign. The management area Health Care is ably assisted by the National Department of Health.

Zonderwater Health Care Manager, Ms Lizzy Tshigovha was pleased to see the positive response shown by both officials and offenders. She also said, among the vulnerable, there were two of-



Offenders are sanitised during screening and testing at Zonderwater Management Area.

fenders who were not suitable for nose swab testing, and their test was done through a mouth swab. Tshigovha was relieved that from the tests conducted, there was no confirmed coronavirus case as yet. ●



Sydney Nhleko, Mthethoshanaphi Sibeko and Philisiwe Nhlengethwa, officials from Piet Retief Community Corrections, sorting food parcels for the families of parolees.

Piet Retief Community Corrections giving back to the community

BY PROMISE BUCHANAN AND ELMON NKUNA

Piet Retief Community Corrections is currently running a poverty alleviation programme, distributing food to needy parolees and probationers and thereby preventing crime.

The programme started when one parolee visited their office, crying for help, as him and his family were starving. DCS officials came together, and decided to collect food from their homes and donate to the parolee.

Ms Promise Buchanan, an official at Piet Retief Community Corrections (ComCor) office, said that assisting the first parolee was only the beginning, as more parolees approached them requesting assistance. "The more the officials gave, the higher the number of parolees who



Piet Retief Community Corrections official, Promise Buchanan visits the family of a parolee in Piet Retief to deliver donated food.

were in need and officials had to devise other means to provide food for the needy families," said Buchanan.

Officials approached Piet Retief Combined School, and requested their left over food. The school has since been assisting with food so that officials can distribute the food to parolees and probationers in the area.

Ms. Nompumelelo Thwala, who is a social worker at ComCor, established a relationship with an NGO known as CMR which supports child-headed households. The NGO also provides DCS with food parcels for the parolees. The partnerships that the office has established with various stakeholders has enabled them to reach more poverty-stricken households in the community. At least seven families have been identified, and are being offered assistance.

The Department of Home Affairs was also roped in to assist with the provision of Identity Documents. Area Coordinator: Social Reintegration, Ms Erica Grobler expressed her gratitude to the officials for going beyond the call of duty to assist needy and vulnerable families. "I have requested the Bethal agriculture section to provide us with seedlings, so that we can help these families to start their own vegetable gardens to help sustain themselves". She said that it is her wish that the relationships established between DCS, Piet Retief Combined School and CMR continue beyond the lockdown period. ●



Malefetsane Mofokeng, Ali Twai and Solomon Radebe demonstrate how the new dispensers work.



Mamokhantso Seekane from the Female Facility at Bizzah Makhathe, sanitizes hands at the main gate before entering the facility.



Manager Production Workshop at Bizzah Makhathe Management Area, Mr Solomon Radebe stands with his creative team of officials and offenders.

Bizzah Makhate demonstrates innovation in the fight against COVID-19

BY REFILOE TAU

Bizzah Makhate Management Area, in the Free State/Northern Cape Region, is committed in flattening the COVID-19 curve and ensuring prevention of the rapid spread of the disease inside correctional facilities.

As part of its mitigation plans, the inventive Production Workshop team, led by Solomon Radebe, is manufacturing sanitiser dispensers which can be mounted on the wall.

Radebe explained that the dispensers are in two designs, one may be operated with your elbow while the other is fitted with a foot pedal.

The team has already distributed more than sixty (60) units within the management area, and aims to assist other management areas in the region.

Area Commissioner, Jacob Mbele commended the team for their creativity and foresight. Emphasizing the importance of the use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), Mbele said that this brilliant idea is one of the best practices that the management area will contribute to support the Regional COVID-19 Infection, Prevention and Control plan. The AC said the project also shows innovation, which creates an environment where officials will be able to transfer needed skills to inmates as part of their offender rehabilitation path. ☺



Southern Cape Area Commissioner, Ms Ndileka Boozi (third from the left) was amongst the officials at George Community Corrections during the handing of food parcels.

GEORGE AND THEMBALETHU Community Corrections go beyond the call of duty

Officials at George and Thembaletu Community Corrections offices, in the Western Cape Region, went beyond the call of duty to ensure effective rehabilitation and social reintegration, by joining hands in support of under privileged families of local parolees and probationers.

The two offices took the initiative to identify some of the most vulnerable households in their communities, and decided to lend a helping hand. Officials funded this poverty alleviation project from their own pockets, and donated food parcels to underprivileged households. Ms Wilma Davids, who is a Community Corrections Social Worker, assisted in identifying the most

deserving homes from the available database. The identified families experienced various challenges, including unemployment and not being able to make a living due to the national lockdown restrictions as a result of Covid-19. Others were faced with impediments such as single parenting, chronic medical conditions and disability. Officials handed over food parcels to the households in an attempt to restore hope and prevent reoffending.



Thembaletu Community Corrections official handing over food parcels.

Southern Cape Area Commissioner, Ms Ndileka Boozi was present to witness the handing over of food parcels to one of the households. She said, the initiative was heart-warming and necessary as the Covid-19 pandemic took everyone by surprise. She further encouraged other Community Corrections offices to continue looking into similar initiatives to uplift communities, and to ensure follow-ups on the development and behaviour of offenders after incarceration.



Parcel handed over to one of George Community Corrections' office lifer, who is unemployed.

"Through these kinds of outreach programmes, the department will hopefully restore the dignity of ex-offenders who have served their time," said Ms. Boozi.

Head of George and Thembaletu Community Corrections, Mr Eddie Myners said he takes pride in the commitment and dedication of such officials who go beyond the call of duty in ensuring effective rehabilitation and social reintegration. ●



Mr George Nel, CEO of Mesani Mining (second from left), accompanied by Yolandie Basson (second from right), handing over donated items to Leeuwkop Management.

Stakeholders boost offender facemask project to combat Covid-19

BY MONA COETZEE

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has a responsibility to ensure that all inmates are in safe custody, and undergo rehabilitation and skills development programmes to lead a meaningful life during, and after serving, their sentence.

Offenders at Leeuwkop Correctional Centre, Gauteng Region, are using their sewing skills to produce 4 000 cloth facemasks to be distributed to the three correctional centres within the management area.

“Our aim is to make at least two facemasks for each offender to enable them to interchange masks in between days. We are grateful to the inmates for availing themselves to be part of the solution. This shows that they are geared towards becoming responsible citizens. We also owe the success of this project to our various stakeholders who donated material to make the

masks. With their support, we were able to supplement our internal resources,” said Acting Area Commissioner Mokhehi Molefe.

Ms Joan Sainsbury from Rotary New Dawn, a charity organisation that teaches art, craft and sewing skills to offenders at Leeuwkop Maximum, donated 500 metres of material and 2 000 metres of elastic band for the making of facemasks. Ms. Sainsbury has been imparting skills to maximum sentenced offenders for the past three years.

Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit Management, led by their Sales & Events Manager Mr Alexandra Mayne, contributed material

“I am happy to give back to DCS, through what they have invested in me. With this skill, I am able to create, teach others and keep myself busy whilst serving my life sentence.”

- Teboho Thelejane

almost worth R10 000 towards the Leeuwkop Offender Recreation Club for making masks.

Mr George Nel, CEO of Mesani Mining, accompanied by Yolandie Basson, also donated elastic band material, which will be used to complete the mask ear bands.

“We are neighbours and good friends to this facility. We need to work closely together as a community. Kyalami Management decided on donating this material, from which about 2 000 masks may be made. We believe that it is important to help one another during these trying times, especially because this contribution will assist with offender skills development,” said Mayne.



Leeuwkop Recreation Officer, Muzi Langa guides offenders as they stitch together masks for the management area

Meshack Maseko, who is the lead tailor in the project, said he saw on the news the challenge of shortage of protective equipment, and when the Area Commissioner came up with this initiative, as offenders, they availed themselves willingly knowing they can make a difference. All 12 participating offenders were rewarded with certificates of appreciation. ●



Durban Management Area inmates hard at work, producing 1 200 masks a day.



Officials at the Durban workshop show off the neatly crafted facemask for officials.

management area and beyond. Acting Workshop Manager, Wendy Valoo said intensive production has been activated and face masks will be manufactured on a mass scale. She indicated that all inmates should receive two face masks each, which includes daily admissions as well as offenders released on Covid-19 parole. The team produces 1 200 masks a day, and 11 110 masks, which were produced in a space of two weeks, were distributed.



The unconquerable spirit of officials to fight the vicious Covid-19 remains intact at Durban Management area.

Durban Management Area remains resolute in the fight against coronavirus

BY MFANAFUTHI SHANGE

Despite the first confirmed case of Covid-19 at Durban Management Area in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the country's biggest correctional facilities, the indomitable spirit of officials remains intact.

About seventy (70) officials, as well as inmates, who came into contact with the first official who tested positive were placed under quarantine, and the affected areas were accordingly decontaminated. The management area has also been delighted to welcome back officials who have tested negative. As part of the Coronavirus DCS Response Strategy, a swift adjustment had to be made in the facility from prevention to containment and treatment.

Acting Area Commissioner, Dumisani Makhaye said the manage-

ment area continues to implement all related measures. "We are moving ahead with our plans, and we ensure compliance with the Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs). It is encouraging to see so many officials embracing our plans to combat the spread of this virus," said Makhaye. Awareness sessions for both officials and inmates are the order of the day, with much emphasis on frequent hand washing, sanitisation and social distancing to be observed at all times.

The production of face masks for inmates is also aimed at curbing the rapid spread of the virus within the

The Management Area is actively participating in meetings of the eThekweni District Joint Operation Committee and Justice Cluster. This has led to a sound relationship between DCS and Justice, which allows courts to prioritise only those offenders whose matters are to be heard and those who are most likely to be granted bail in order to curtail the mass movement of offenders during this period.

The management area is also exploring non-contact ways of applying for bail, using technology such as Skype. The intention is to fast track bail applications on a larger scale, to complement the Audio Visual Remand (AVR) system currently being utilised. ●



Colonel Buke Solomon Modike explains the procedure for the completion of DNA and fingerprint process to officials at the Female Correctional Centre at Kgoši Mampuru II.

Kgoši Mampuru II Management Area gears up to ensure speedy implementation of Covid-19 parole

BY MOCHETA MONAMA

In line with the pronouncement by President Cyril Ramaphosa to place low-risk inmates in selected categories on parole to curb the spread of Covid-19, officials at Kgoši Mampuru II Management Area, Gauteng Region, are hard at work ensuring speedy completion of all related DNA and fingerprint processes, as well as finalisation of relevant documentation, to give effect to the release.

According to Colonel Buke Solomon Modike, from the South African Police Service, Tshwane Central police station, the DNA sample and fingerprints process is done to ensure that only qualifying inmates benefit from this process. "We take their DNA samples and fingerprints to check if they are not linked with other criminal cases that we are busy with", said Colonel Modike. Inmates who qualify will be placed on parole instead of having

their sentences remitted.

The decision taken by government to combat the spread of the coronavirus in correctional centres is aimed at relieving correctional facilities of overcrowding. The Covid-19 parole dispensation applies only to low-risk inmates who have completed their minimum detention period, or will approach this period in the coming five years. The objective is to provide for correctional facilities to ensure social distancing, and also eliminate other factors which may endanger



A female offender undergoes the finger print process for Covid-19 parole.

both officials and inmates.

Head of Female Correctional Centre, Ms Ameeta Govender welcomed the decision by government and indicated that the move will make a difference and reduce overcrowding in the centres. "This will in turn allow us a chance to comply with Covid-19 regulations", said Govender.



A member from the South African Police Service takes down details of an offender in the presence of Mr Emmanuel Khoza, Area Commissioner at Kgoši Mampuru II Management Area

Area Commissioner, Mr Emmanuel Khoza thanked the SAPS Central team, led by Colonel Modike and Brigadier Letswalo, for their continuous support in ensuring the success of this project. Khoza further reiterated the importance of the process for both the department, SAPS and the community at large towards breaking the cycle of crime in South Africa. ●



Mr Mandla Mkabela has his hands sanitized before gaining access into Klerksdorp Correctional Centre.

“Our approach in these trying times should be to ensure that we hold hands together in finding better ways to close the grey areas, in order to prevent and combat the rapid spread of the virus.”

- Mr. Mandla Mkabela

Let's hold hands together and find better ways to fight the coronavirus, says Chief Operations Commissioner

BY BUSISIWE SHIBAMBO

Chief Operations Commissioner (COC), Mr. Mandla Mkabela has called on DCS staff to pull together in finding better ways to fight against the coronavirus.

“Although we have seen some challenges in certain areas, this is not the time to fight amongst ourselves. Our approach in these trying times should be to ensure that we hold hands together in finding better ways to close the grey areas, in order to prevent and combat the rapid spread of the virus,” he said.

As part of his Covid-19 operational visits across the country, which started from 18 April 2020, Mr. Mkabela conducted an impromptu

visit to Klerksdorp Correctional Centre, Gauteng Region, recently to assess levels of compliance with Department of Correctional Services (DCS) protocols. Another objective of his unannounced visit was to get a true picture of operations at centre level.

The COC alluded to the Department's Covid-19 response plan and standard operating procedures. Hence, centre visits enabled monitoring and evaluation of adherence thereof. He said that, although certain centres are implementing best practices in preventing and



Area Commissioner Minah Maile showing Chief Operations Commissioner, Mandla Mkabela, the quarantine area during his visit to Klerksdorp Correctional Centre.

combating the spread of the virus, non-compliance by others poses a threat of a rapid spread.

Area Commissioner, Minah Maile briefed the COC on various interventions in place in the management area. Head of Centre, Mr Mthuthuzeli Kampi showed Mr. Mkabela the identified quarantine sites and isolation areas. The COC commended Klerksdorp for being prompt in ensuring that no person enters the facilities beyond the access control gate without being screened, and said his visit to Klerksdorp made him realise how well the management area has prepared for any eventuality that may arise during the coronavirus pandemic.

The COC applauded all DCS staff who are working tirelessly against the coronavirus. ●



Grade 12 inmate class is in session following the resumption of teaching and learning on 8 June 2020.

Back to school for Grade 12 inmate learners at Barberton Management Area

BY MESIA HLUNGWANI

Inmate learners from Barberton Management Area, Limpopo/Mpumalanga/North West (LMN) Region, are back to school in numbers, after spending almost three months out of the classroom due to the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

With the country having moved to Lockdown Level 3, on 1 June 2020, and the easing of restrictions, the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, announced the staggered resumption of academic activities, starting with grades 7 and 12 learners.

Schools re-opened on 8 June 2020, and the first day at Barberton was successful as all educators reported for work and inmates completing grade 12 came out in in numbers to resume classes.

The stage is set for learning and teaching at Barberton. Inside classrooms, learners sit more than one metre apart to maintain social distance and wear their cloth face masks throughout. They are sanitised ap-

propriately as they enter the school premises, and when they leave.

The management area ensured that all schools were decontaminated prior to reopening. Water dispensers were placed at the entrance points of all classrooms, with soap for offenders and teachers to wash their hands.

Barberton Management Area has two formal schools renowned for producing quality matric results, having achieved an overall grade 12 performance of 86% during 2019. The schools are Vuselela Learning Centre at Maximum Correctional Centre and Umlalati Learning Centre at Town Youth Correctional Centre. Some of the programmes offered at these schools include adult education and training (AET), high school and

technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Vuselela Learning Centre has 17 learners, with eight (8) inmates registered for matric this year.

The Head of Town Youth Correctional Centre, Mr Noah Nkosi indicated that before offenders leave their cells for school, they are screened thoroughly to make sure that those with symptoms are isolated. "We are adherent to the Covid-19 regulations, and make sure that offenders and officials are screened before learning and teaching commences. We also check their temperature and symptoms, and those with a high temperature or displaying any symptoms are isolated," said Nkosi.



Inmates lining up for parade before the start of schooling activities.

Musa Mdluli (23), an offender at Town Youth Correctional Centre, serving a life sentence indicated that he is excited to be back at school as this affords him an opportunity to finish his matric. "I have been longing to complete matric as I came here with grade 11. When I heard that schools were closed indefinitely, my dreams started to fade but I am excited that I will complete my matric and further my studies as I intend to enrol for my LLB degree next year".

Surprise Phoku (24), who is serving 10 years for robbery, appreciated the manner in which the centre is adhering to the Covid-19 requirements. "Officials in this centre are dedicated when it comes to dealing with this pandemic, they screen us regularly and ensure that social distance is maintained at all times," Phoku said.

Barberton Management Area has not yet recorded a confirmed coronavirus case. ●

Psychosocial support for officials a vital component in the management of Covid-19

BY NELISWA MZIMBA

Uncertainty about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our correctional facilities has taken a toll on the mental wellbeing of both officials and offenders.

The primary focus has been to ensure physical protection against infection for officials and inmates through daily screening, cleaning and decontamination of offices and cells, and provision of personal protective equipment to enable safe business continuity for the Department's essential services.

However, the DCS HR guidelines for the management of COVID-19 guides managers not to overlook the importance of seeking to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on employees' mental wellbeing.

The role of Employee Assistance Programmes

Managers and supervisors should make officials/learners and interns aware of where and how they can access mental health support services and facilitate access to such services should they have concerns about their employees' mental wellbeing.

In these uniquely difficult circumstances of battling with Covid-19, Employee Assistance Practitioners (EAPs) must be availed to assist officials/learners and interns and their families with psychosocial problems that may be present before, during and after the identification/diagnosis of suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Use of tele-therapy as an option to talk to EAPs should be encouraged to assist officials under quarantine build mental strength and help them

to find peace in the fact that they are also doing their part to "flatten the curve".

Employee Assistance Programmes are there to enhance employee functioning and performance. They are designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns such as health, family, financial, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee performance.

Reaching out, a human factor

Managers and supervisors have a role to play. Precise and open verbal communication is vital amongst working teams. It is extremely important for supervisors to communicate in a supportive way to officials infected and affected by the coronavirus.

Transparency with officials/learners and interns who are confirmed/suspected cases and their colleagues is crucial to alleviate anxiety and encourage calmness in the workplace

Ongoing support is not only ex-

pected from EAPs and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) representatives but it is also required from managers and supervisors to encourage good working relationships. Managers must also ensure successful reintegration into the workplace after quarantine.

The DCS HR guidelines for the management of COVID-19 encourages regular communication and engagement by management. Support is extremely necessary to enhance performance and ensure business continuity.

Taking shared responsibility

As DCS continues to grapple with ways in which to address the health, safety and productivity of officials and inmates, it is imperative that supervisors and their supervisees work together and take shared responsibility for safeguarding their physical health and mental wellbeing.

Supervisors and team leaders will also experience additional pressure relating to the responsibilities of their roles and should make a point of looking after their own mental wellbeing and reaching out for support.

Supervisees should play their parts by practising self-care, adopting healthy, and not destructive, coping strategies and making use of availed employee support services when they are in need.



Do you have any COVID-19 queries or complaints?

Call the Department
of Correctional
Services Call Centre
Monday to Friday,
during normal
working hours.

Let's all take
personal
responsibility,
and see our
Department to a
better future!



Enquiry.Complaints@dcs.gov.za