



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media Statement
For Immediate Use
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Launch of Vaccination Rollout Programme for Correctional Services Officials and Inmates

On Sunday, citizens of the world commemorated the Nelson Mandela International Day, in remembrance of our icon, Tata Nelson Mandela, who personified humanity.

The Day enjoins citizens of the world to contribute towards meeting the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in communities.

The United Nations through the Nelson Mandela Rules, promotes humane conditions of imprisonment, raises awareness about inmates being a continuous part of society and values the work of correctional officials as a social service of particular importance.

Recently, some parts of our country have been under intense attack and mayhem.

We are aware that those who seek to derail the course of our constitutional democracy, targeted correctional centres to attempt to ferment disorder.

By and large, this was unsuccessful, because inmates in correctional centres across the country refused to be co-opted into further acts of disorder in the country.

We also value correctional officials, the good service that they continue to render to society does not go unnoticed.

We pause and salute all officials in brown uniform.

Your commitment and dedication continue to inspire us, rest assured that services you render to the people of South Africa, are of paramount importance.

The manner in which COVID-19 has been contained in our facilities is not a miracle, it is due to the hard work of the men and women in brown.

We would not be in a position to roll out this programme today without the collaboration of inmates, we also thank them for their continued cooperation.

So members of the media, our launch of the Vaccination Rollout Programme in Correctional Services, is also inspired by our obligation to abide by the supreme law of the country, the Constitution.

The health of inmates is addressed in Section 35 (2) of the Constitution. This obliges the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to ensure that:

“Everyone who is detained, including every sentenced prisoner, has the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, including at least exercise and the provision, at state expense, of adequate accommodation, nutrition, reading material and medical treatment.”

As a result, a policy position which excludes the vaccination of inmates in our custody could be opposed on human rights grounds, particularly given that the government has a duty of care to people in custody.

Owing to their institutional settings, correctional centres are high-risk environments for infectious disease outbreaks.

Correctional centres are generally overcrowded, and as result, non-pharmaceutical interventions have their limitations, and people in Correctional centres have contact with a large staff pool.

Large, explosive outbreaks in crowded institutional settings remain a major ongoing risk not only for our centres, but for the society at large.

Thus far, this pandemic has affected Correctional Centres' ability to function.

It has heightened the risk of infections seeding outside of Correctional Centres through interactions between correctional officials and communities, court visits, hospital admissions, and the admission and release of inmates.

The World Health Organization observes that; ***compared to the wider community, people living in prisons have a disproportionately higher burden of comorbidities, including non-communicable diseases, which increase their chances of suffering severe outcomes from COVID-19. W.H.O. calls on leaders to address health inequalities and ensure that everyone has access to quality health services, when and where they need them, adding that this issue is especially relevant for detention facilities.***

It is against this background that we are rolling out the vaccination programme in Correctional Services. Vaccinations are a bulwark against the rapid spread of COVID-19.

We are obliged to provide vaccinations for correctional officials and inmates to prevent outbreaks, and ensure the basic rights of inmates, officials and the wider community, are protected.

The National Department of Health (NDoH) has provided the one dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine to DCS for vaccination of inmates.

Some of our inmate population has been vaccinated under the 50 plus bracket. We will target to reach all inmates irrespective of their age groups.

At the start of the year, the health department unveiled their plan to vaccinate 40-million South Africans as part of a three-phase roll-out.

According to this plan, 67% of the population would need to be vaccinated in order to achieve population immunity, this is approximately just over 40 million South Africans.

Many DCS employees have already received their first dose of vaccine across both public and private vaccination sites in the country.

DCS employees with effect from the 15th of July, irrespective of age, can access any vaccination site without having to undertake self-registration on the Electronic Vaccine Data System (EVDS).

To date, one thousand, three hundred and twenty-five (**1 325**) Health Care Professionals in Correctional Services, one thousand, eight hundred and ninety-nine (**1 899**) **Correctional** officials and sixty-one (**61**) educators in Corrections received vaccination.

One thousand, five hundred and nine (**1 509**) inmates who fall under the 50 -59 bracket have been vaccinated.

Yesterday when we kick-started our vaccination programme, targeting all inmates, a total of two thousand five hundred and sixty nine (2 569) inmates across the country were vaccinated.

Of the 40 million South Africans we need to vaccinate to reach population immunity, 140 319 constitute inmates, this translates to 0.34 percent.

Far less than half a percent.

Both offenders and officials must consent to receiving the vaccine. DCS continues to raise awareness about vaccine safety and the importance of being vaccinated.

These awareness campaigns which target both officials and inmates, seek to persuade skeptical inmates and officials to avail themselves for vaccination.

Our observation is that as more information was provided, those who were wary of vaccination became more at ease and volunteered to be candidates.

Vaccine skepticism continues to permeate across some sections of society, we therefore encourage both officials and inmates to empower themselves with correct and scientific information on vaccines.

We understand vaccine anxiety, but we appeal to all of South Africans to be vaccinated, this will protect lives.

While we rollout the vaccination programme, health and safety measures, such as:

- Wearing of masks
- physical distancing, and
- active screening,

Will continue to apply even after vaccines are administered. This will ensure that layers of protection continue to be in place in our correctional centres.

The health and safety of our inmates, officials, and the public, have been our top priority during this pandemic.

Vaccines are the best defense to protect both offenders and officials against COVID-19 and when paired with existing measures, this will help to bolster our overall public health and safety.

DCS will continue to work closely with the National Department of Health on its vaccinations plans and rollout.

By publicly taking the jab, I wanted to allay fears and enhance public trust on vaccines.

I hope more and more people will be encouraged to come forward and get vaccinated, it is in our hands, let us save lives.

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