

## **MEDIA INQUIRY: SPOTLIGHT**

**Date: 04 May 2020**

- 1. How is the Department of Health working with Social Development's psychosocial support teams to link families in need of support during this time?**

**Response:**

Those families in need of support during the COVID-19 response present themselves in different ways to the Department of Health. Some are identified in the health facilities while others contact the call centres and hotlines that have been established by the National Department of Health.

Those families in need of social support that present to the health facilities are referred by health care workers to the social support programmes that are provided by the Department of Social Development.

Data that was collated from the call centres and hotlines showed that the majority of those that call require support for the following thematic areas:

<b>THEME</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
<b>1.Food Security</b>	1.Social development contact 2.Food parcels queries 3.Process for Social relied grant

## **2.Covid-19 pathogenesis**

- 1.What is novel infectious disease?
- 2.What is a coronavirus?
- 3.What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?
- 4.What are the symptoms & signs of COVID-19?
- 5.What is the mode of transmission of COVID-19?
- 6.What is incubation period? How long is it for COVID-19?
- 7.What is the treatment for COVID-19?
- 8.A novel coronavirus is found to be the causative agent of COVID-19. Is there no cure?
- 9.Is the death rate very high for COVID-19?
- 10.Will there be no symptom for COVID-19? Will patients die suddenly on the street?
- 11.Will COVID-19 disappear spontaneously when the weather becomes warm?
- 12.How to prevent COVID-19?
- 13.What is the function of mask?
- 14.What are the other measures to prevent respiratory tract infection other than wearing a mask?
- 15.If there is no water and liquid soap, can I use alcohol-based hand rub instead?
- 16.Can babies get Covid-19
- 17.Testing sites and testing schedule
- 18.TAT for results
- 19.What does it mean to be self isolated, quarantine
- 20.Managing positive case
- 21.Is Covid-19 deadly
- 22.Effect of COVID 19 when on ARVs

<b>4. Health facilities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facility closed</li> <li>2. Staff taking longer breaks</li> <li>3. Only Covid-19 cases clients seen</li> <li>4. Not given treatment</li> <li>5. Ambulance service</li> </ol>
<b>4.Workplace and occupation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Lack of PPE</li> <li>2.Employers not paying salary</li> <li>3.Colleagues/People positive but reporting on duty</li> </ol>
<b>5.Permits</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Travelling for funeral, pick children, movement</li> </ol>
<b>6.UIF</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Process to apply</li> <li>2.Not paid yet</li> <li>2. Contacts details</li> </ol>
<b>7.Lockdown regulations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are people allowed to buy groceries?</li> <li>2. Possibility of extending lockdown</li> <li>3. Church service continuing</li> <li>4. Can one jog</li> <li>5. Unable to buy new born baby's clothes</li> <li>6. Community/Individuals/Churches not complying to lockdown</li> </ol>
<b>8.Limited involvement of traditional sector within the Covid-19 response</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traditional can cure the disease</li> <li>2. Wife is supposed to be transported in another province for traditional healing</li> </ol>
<b>9. Water and Sanitation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No water supply</li> </ol>
<b>10. Housing challenges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staying in small house and unable to comply with social distance</li> </ol>

<b>11. Anxiety and psychological challenges</b>	1. Worry and anxiety regarding Covid-19 2. Having problems and unable to deal with? Where can I go for counselling?
<b>12. Waste Collection</b>	1. Where to report for non-collection of waste
<b>13. Volunteer to the Covid-19 response</b>	1. How can one volunteer?
<b>14. Business</b>	1. Process for supplying business with masks etc 2. Which banks are working 3. When will lockdown stop in order to reopen the business
<b>15. Fake news and scams</b>	1. Received a message claiming that he won and he must phone the COVID-19 Hotline number 2. How to report fake news? 3. Media circulating mixed messages
<b>16. Electricity challenges</b>	1. No lights 2. Prepaid meter faulty

**2. How is the Department supporting mental health care workers during this time? (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers etc).**

**Response:**

Among other things, the National Department of Health has supported mental health care practitioners by:

- (i) Providing “Guidelines on Psychosocial Support for Health Workers during the COVID Response”. The guideline provides mechanisms and processes for the management of psychosocial stressors during this time, with specific actions outlined to be undertaken by managers as well as the affected health workers.
- (ii) Providing “Guidelines on Mental Health Interventions During the Covid-19 Disaster”. The objective of the guideline is to among other things:

- a. Provide the mental health practitioners with the relevant tools to promote and protect the mental well-being of the population and raise awareness about mental disorders and mental health problems that may arise due to COVID-19 epidemic.
- b. To direct health care practitioners, multidisciplinary mental health teams and the heads of health establishments on actions to be undertaken to identify and manage mental health problems and mental disorders arising out of the COVID-19 Disaster.
- c. To ensure that mental facilities comply with measures that have already been prescribed to manage the COVID 19 epidemic.

**3. What are the Department's greatest mental health concerns during this time and what is being done to address them, or plans to address them in the future?**

**Response:**

The Department's greatest concerns are among others (i) the likely increase of psychiatric morbidity associated with the COVID-19 epidemic, (ii) the mental well-being of health care workers, (iii) susceptibility to COVID-19 of mental health care users in inpatient mental health facilities.

Actions that were undertaken were to:

- (i) Develop in collaboration with the "Mental Health Think Tank", which consists of Heads of Psychiatry and Psychology, Academics and Researchers, Representatives' of Non-Governmental Mental Health Organizations the "Guidelines on Mental Health Interventions to be undertaken during the COVID-19 Disaster". This guideline was approved and distributed to all nine provinces and mental health facilities. The effort is now put on monitoring the compliance of mental health facilities to the prescripts provided in these guidelines.
- (ii) The above-mentioned guidelines also prescribe actions that must be undertaken to address the mental health issues at population level.
- (iii) With regard to the management of psychological stressors during COVID-19, a guideline was developed through the Occupational Health and Safety Work Stream, which advised on the interventions to be undertaken on mental health and counselling for health workers.

- (iv) Call centres and Hotlines were established to ensure that up to date and accurate information is provided on COVID-19. This includes precautionary measures, resources available in the district, local outbreak situation, etc. In line with empirical evidence is meant to promote a sense of safety in the population; calming, a sense of self and community efficacy/agency, connectedness and hope.
- (v) Working together with the professional mental health practitioner groups or associations, a list of those that volunteer to provide pro-bono mental health care telephonically or through video conferencing was compiled and distributed to all nine provinces for use.

**4. Is there any mental health screening going on in parallel with the COVID 19 screening?**

**Response:**

The National Department of Health has not prescribed any screening parallel with the COVID-19 screening.

**5. Are essential psychiatric medicines widely available across the country?**

**Response:**

Psychiatric medicines are available across the country and where there are stock challenges therapeutic alternatives are made available.

**6. Have mental health care users been supplied with multiple months' worth of medication during this time?**

**Response:**

Each individual mental health care user is evaluated for suitability for eligibility to multiple months of medication supply. It should be noted due to many clinical related reasons, the majority of mental health care users still have to be seen each month to evaluate stability or resurgence of symptoms, side effects from psychotropic medications, some users are on injectables that must be taken each month, some users require that blood tests be done to monitor blood levels and effects etc.

**7. Are Community Health Workers adequately trained in mental health care?**

**Response:**

The current community health workers training content that was developed by the National Department of Health contains mental health content. These are periodically reviewed to update them and add new content.

**END**