

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>COVID-19: PSA extremely concerned about effect of National Department of Health change in leadership on vaccine roll-out</b>
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<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), a major Union representing employees at the National Department of Health, is extremely concerned that the change in leadership at the National Department of Health will have a detrimental effect to the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out programme.

It was reported that the Director-General of the Department has been placed on a special leave while being questioned by the Special Investigations Unit for his involvement in the digital vibes scandal. The deputy Director-General has now been appointed to act in that position. The resignation of the former Minister, Dr Mkhize, already impacted vaccination roll-out and healthcare services during the pandemic. It has also been reported that more senior employees of the Department are likely to be suspended, thereby resulting in a total lack of top management at the helm of the Department.

The continuous change in leadership destabilises the Department's service-delivery model. The Department continues to struggle to fulfil its constitutional obligation to render effective health-care services to citizens. The progress achieved to date has been derailed by the absence of sustained leadership in the Department. As a result, the country will not be able reach maximum immunity by the end of December 2021.

The PSA has always advocated that Government must make every effort to root out corruption but before hastily suspending employees, the Department of Health should have a plan in place to eliminate vacuums that will hamper service delivery.

The PSA previously raised concerns at bargaining council level about the plight of frontline workers during the pandemic. The poor working conditions, however, continue to persist in health facilities across the country. The Department is now faced with an enormous task of rendering effective healthcare services without proper leadership at the helm. The PSA urges the management of the Department to ensure quality administration and stability in the Department in support of service delivery during these most pressing times for the country.

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