

Feedback: Steering Committee meeting – 2 July 2021

COVID-19 presentation by special guest of Department

According to a presentation by the Government Pensions Administration Agency (GPAA) representative, there is a great similarity in its model, structures and functions. Its recent approach in countering the third wave was to screen all Security Officers, Cleaners and related occupational classes. Senior Management Service cadres and all employees not sharing offices are reporting for work twice a week. Managers must ensure strict adherence to the quota of attendance as per the DPSA Circular, which requires 30% of the staff compliment to be at work at any given time. All staff with the necessary tools of trade are to work from home. The pandemic also taught it lessons about security and confidentiality of information and safeguarding and well-being of the employer's equipment. It was noted that set targets are adhered to by employees. Those employees whose nature of job execution does not warrant working from home, such as Security Officers, Cleaners, Food Services Aid, Groundsmen, Messengers, etc., are rotationally reporting at their offices, subject to the required social distancing and safety protocols.

Alert-level 4 internal memorandum on regulations and DPSA circulars

The employer reported that after the promulgation and issuing of regulations by the President on 27 June 2021 on lockdown alert-level 4, the Department's memorandum was accordingly updated and aligned to *DPSA Circular 5 of 2021*. The purpose is to remind all members of the need to adhere to safety protocols in the light of increased COVID-19 infections. The issued latter *DPSA Circular* provides guidance to all Heads of Departments to implement internal decongestion measures by introducing rotational and/or working from home (WFH) protocols for employees whose functions warrant such. Management must ensure accessibility by employees to tools of trade and more importantly, a performance agreement must be concluded with individuals, which must ensure measurable outputs. A final draft memorandum was shared and will be submitted to management for ratification. As soon as it is approved, the employer will distribute it. PSA members will be kept informed by the Branch Executive through the WhatsApp group, which proved to be more efficient.

Travelling for operational reasons

Parties, during the previous meeting, submitted a recommendation to the Director-General (DG) to restrict travelling within and outside Gauteng as most members seemed to be infected by such. The approval currently lies with the DG until further notice. The intent was to minimise travelling by staff members, thus limiting the spread of infections. A further recommendation to have all events cancelled, was endorsed by the DG. All Minister and Deputy Minister events were cancelled.

Vaccination plan

The employer reported that it has not received any communication and/or guidance from the DPSA. It is expecting the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) to coordinate the process as previously proposed. It has informed and encouraged all staff members between 50 to 59 years to register for vaccination. Currently, there are almost 156 employees in this category and between 60 to 89 years there are 29 candidates. There is no verification whether all qualifying employees did indeed register, as the registration is administered by the Department of Health.

Update by units

It was reported that the most affected unit is Supply Chain Management. It was agreed that should more cases arise in a unit, all staff members in those units must be tested. Over and above contact and tracing, parties agreed to recommend to the DG to have a follow-up contact session with staff members who are/were infected and isolate/quarantine themselves to ascertain whether any special assistance may be rendered by the Department during that period. The latter approach was raised by PSA after members reported that medical schemes do not cover the purchasing of medicines for speedy recovery such as antibiotics, vitamins, etc. The employer indicated buy-in to assist in such cases. Another concern was the furnishing of proof by staff after they have recovered and issues around those who have come into contact with colleagues who were in contact with those who have tested positive. These issues will be discussed in the next Steering Committee meeting.

Facilities confirmed that it has secured sufficient laptops. Members who are in need are advised to submit their request. The only challenge is the acquisition of 3Gs and cellphones. There are ongoing meetings with various service providers for the best deals.

Members will be informed of developments.

The PSA would like to pass sincere condolences to all members who lost loved ones and wishes members affected by COVID-19 a speedy recovery.

GENERAL MANAGER