

Multi-lateral meeting with HOD: Eastern Cape Department of Health – 19 November 2024

Several critical issues affecting the Department and its workforce were discussed:

Financial constraints and recovery efforts

The Department is grappling with severe financial challenges caused by ongoing budget cuts. These constraints have limited the ability to hire essential human resources. Despite this, the Department remains committed to recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing evolving healthcare demands linked to population changes.

Medico-legal settlements and accruals

Historical medico-legal settlements continue to be a significant hurdle, with outstanding accruals and payables disrupting operations. Many service providers are threatening to withdraw services owing to delayed payments. To address this, the Department is proposing debt-restructuring plans and is engaging with top creditors to resolve payment delays.

Integrated medico-legal strategy

Progress has been made through the integrated medico-legal strategy, including a decline in new claims and a reduction in lump-sum settlements since the strategy's implementation. However, establishing a compensatory fund for medico-legal claims requires legislative reform, which is still in progress.

Cost-savings and efficiency projects

The Department is focused on driving efficiency through optimising service delivery and the organogram; addressing major cost drivers such as the NHLS and medicine expenses; and reviewing commuted overtime policies.

Financial stability and audit goals

The Department aims to achieve an unqualified audit opinion for the 2025/26-financial year. This will reflect stronger financial controls and reduced risk of financial losses. As part of its planning, the Annual Recruitment Plan for 2025/26 is being prioritised.

Uniform allowance

The HOD committed to following up on the approval for payment of the uniform allowance for nursing staff. A formal circular on this matter will be issued soon.

Consultative structures

Organised labour proposed the establishment of a Provincial Bargaining Forum. The employer clarified that such a structure already exists through the PHSDSBC Chamber. However, as an alternative, the employer proposed forming a multi-lateral forum. Consultations are ongoing to finalise this platform.

Strategic focus areas ahead

The Department outlined its key priorities for the upcoming period:

- Rebuilding health systems in preparation for National Health Insurance (NHI).
- Ensuring optimal budget utilisation to address the burden of disease and improve patient care.
- Enhancing responsiveness to the needs of communities served.

The PSA acknowledges the challenges faced by members during these challenging times and thanks you for your unwavering support. The PSA remains committed to advocating for the best interests of members and will provide updates on developments.

Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER