Official reply: 05 October 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**1659**. **Ms E R Wilson (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) Whether the investigation launched in March 2016 into alleged foster grant fraud in the Empangeni SA Social Security Agency offices in KwaZulu-Natal has been completed yet; if not, (a) why not and (b) when will it be completed; if so, (i) what were the main findings and (ii) what action has she taken to implement disciplinary procedures to date;

(2) whether any staff members were suspended as a result of the specified investigation; if so, (a) what are their (i) names and (ii) designations and (b) for what period has each of the specified staff members been suspended;

(3) are the specified staff members receiving their full salaries while on suspension; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) why and (b) for how long will the specified staff members receive their full salaries while on suspension? NW1871E

**Reply:**

**1 (a)** This investigation is not yet completed as it requires intense perusal of documents, schools visits and homesteads as well as engagement with external stakeholders to obtain information.

 **(b)** It is anticipated that the investigation will be completed by 30 November 2016. Some of the phases involved in the process; which are the formal suspension and the construction of charges for each individual official: have been finalized. We will now be serving them with notices for disciplinary hearing which will contain their charges. Disciplinary proceedings will then commence in the first week of October 2016.

1. The main findings thus far are as follows:
* Court orders and proceedings issued without the children's court hearing.
* Court documents are generated in the office.
* Ethical erosion (accepting bribery, no tinge of conscience and sensitivity towards working with vulnerable groups)
* Trend of revolving children when exiting the system to add younger children to prolong the duration of receiving the foster care grant (ghost children)
* Noncompliance to Legislative mandates and Policies relating to Social Services Profession and Social Welfare Service delivery: Social Workers practicing without professional registration with the Council.
1. We are implementing disciplinary action against 27 employees implicated to the alleged foster care grant fraud.

**2. (a)** All the 27 officials implicated to the alleged foster care grant fraud are precautionally suspended.

1. The names of the officials will be provided once the investigation is finalized by 30th November 2016.
2. All the 27 officials implicated to the alleged foster care grant fraud are Social Workers.

 **(b)** These officials were precautionary suspended from the 17th August 2016 pending the outcome of the investigation.

1. Yes, the specified staff members are receiving their full salaries while on suspension and this is within the labour law.

1. The Disciplinary Code and Procedure for the Public Service makes provision of a suspension of an employee as a precautionary measure which does not constitute judgment, and must be on full pay.
2. Employees will receive their full salaries until disciplinary processes have been finalized. The Code stipulates that where an employee is suspended, a disciplinary enquiry must be held within 60 days. It is envisaged that the hearings of these employees will be set for the first week of October 2016 and it is envisaged that the process will be completed within 90 days.