|  |
| --- |
| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1101**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 7/05/2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 12 OF 2021**

**Ms S J Graham (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

(1) (a) What is the total number of technical and vocational education and training colleges that have a functional Employee Assistance Programme and (b) in each case, is there a funded position on the organogram to deal with the Employee Assistance Programme;

(2) for those colleges that do not have Employee Assistance Programmes, what are the reasons that they do not have one in place;

(3) whether the programme will be established; if not, why not; if so, by what date;

(4) (a) what services does the Employee Assistance Programme provide to employees and (b) if no Employee Assistance Programme exists, what measures have been put in place to support employees who would ordinarily have used the programme? **NW1288E**

**REPLY:**

(1) The Department has developed a standardised organisational structure and Post Provision Norms (PPN) model for TVET colleges, which makes provision for a unit and funded post for Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) services within each TVET college. This model and standardised organisational structure is currently being implemented at a college level over 3 years in line with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework budget.

(2)The EHW unit at Head Office has been capacitating colleges whilst the PPN model was being developed and supporting the implementation of programmes in colleges.

Colleges were capacitated with 3-day EHW capacity-building workshops. There were 86 psychosocial interventions in TVET colleges. Processes of employee health and wellness were followed, which were agreed upon by labour structures within the Department.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and currently, the EHW unit has trauma counselled, tracked and traced 70 officials, and equipped colleges with various protocols in ensuring adherence to the prescripts of the Department of Public Service and Administration.

(3)The support functions and implementation of the EHW programmes does not depend on the establishment of an EHW unit, as it is the right of all members within the public service to be provided with health care services based on the Bill of Rights section 24 (a) and section 27 (i), as per the directive from the Minister of Public Service and Administration in Circular 1 of 2017 on Employee Health and Wellness.

(4) (a)The EHW programmes are based on the National Strategic Framework of Employee Health and Wellness of 2008. The programmes are as follows:

* HIV, AIDS, TB & STI programmes.
* The Health and Productivity Management programme focuses on the return on investment and other psychological, biological, medical and environmental challenges that impede officials to perform in the workplace. Implementation of this programme is done in tandem with leave determination policies, job access strategies, reasonable accommodation, employment equity and the Policy on the Implementation of Incapacity in the public service.
* The Safety Health Environment Risk and Quality (SHERQ) programme is directed by Regulation 53 of the Public Service Regulation that heads of departments must establish and maintain a safe and healthy work environment for employees of the department and a safe and healthy service delivery environment for members of the public. This programme does not operate in isolation but is implemented with the COVID-19 master plan and protocols, and reasonable accommodation and buildings, e.g. maintenance schedules of lifts and equipment by facilities management and the Departmental SHERQ policy.
* The Wellness Management Physical programme includes a sports policy whereby members of the Department can participate in healthy lifestyle programmes. Wellness Sporting Committees exist in colleges where a healthy lifestyle is promoted and ensuring that officials achieve a work-life balance. Daily body-mass-index screening is done as part of this programme.
* The Financial Wellness programme comprises of National Treasury workshops for Departmental officials, including colleges, on savings and managing finances.
* The Wellness Management Psychosocial programme cuts across all EHW interventions, implemented in conjunction with other Departmental programmes and customised for officials. Scheduled 8 of the Labour Relation Act is invoked in cases that need ill-health retirement.
* The Organisational Wellness programme incorporates SHERQ as the environment can incapacitate a person; hence, reasonable accommodation is implemented in various ways and can lead to officials being re-allocated to other work or work terrain appropriate for wheelchair-bound officials.

(b)   The EHW programmes are being utilised and programmes are in place within the EHW work plans.