**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 1264**

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**1264. Dr M MGondwe (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) What number of (a) new and (b) existing beneficiaries of the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) are currently on the waiting list to see a SASSA-contracted assessment doctor in George, Riversdale, Knysna, Mossel Bay and PlettenbergBay;

(2) For what period are SASSA beneficiaries expected to wait before they can be seen by a SASSA-contracted assessment doctor in the specified areas;

(3) What number of SASSA contracted assessment doctors are assigned to the specified areas;

(4) What are the reasons that SASSA only use SASSA-contracted doctors and not doctors from the Department of Health to see clients in the specified areas;

(5) What measures have (a) SASSA and (b) her department put in place in order to address the backlog of SASSA beneficiaries waiting to see SASSA-contracted doctors in the specified areas? NW1630

**REPLY:**

1. All clients seeking to apply for disability related grants are booked at SASSA Local Offices using the Electronic Medical Assessment Statistical Template. Such clients are booked for an assessment to a particular assessment site on a particular date and there is no differentiation on new and existing beneficiaries. This booking is to assist the Agency to monitor service demands and the time clients have to wait before they are assessed. At this stage clients awaiting an assessment who have already been booked for the specified offices are as below:

* George: 1 385; Knysna: 120; Riversdale: 31, Mossel Bay: 125 and Plettenberg Bay: 32

1. SASSA strives to ensure that all clients booked are assessed within 30 days and clients waiting for longer than 30 days are referred to as backlogs, and programme managers are required to come up with innovative measures to avoid the emergence of backlogs.
2. The South African Social Security Agency contracts doctors provincially so as to allow for the flexibility to deploy such resources to deal with service demands at specific time periods and to allow for rotation as a risk mitigation strategy. SASSA has directly contracted a total of 10 doctors in the Western Cape. The Western Cape SASSA has a contract with all Provincial Health Districts so that the Department of Health doctors can conduct assessments for SASSA clients and claim an assessment fee for each assessment undertaken.
3. SASSA utilises a hybrid model for medial assessment for social grant assessments. This model relies on doctors from both the Department of Healthin accordance with a contract entered into as well as privately contracted medical officers. As reported, SASSA has only 10 privately contracted medical officers in Western Cape. There was an open tender advertised for services, but there was a very low response rate to the process that was undertaken. The Health District in the George area is not coping with the social assistance demands which has resulted in the large number of backlog assessments.
4. The Electronic Medical Assessment Template, flags all clients scheduled more than 30 days for an assessment from the date of booking. In such situations programme managers are expected to either add a resource in the form of a doctor, an additional assessment day within that week or utilise doctors from other areas in the province. In urgent cases, SASSA will request assistances from doctors contracted in other provinces.

In response to the shortage of contracted doctors, SASSA in the Western Cape has on 5 May 2020 been granted approval for deviation from normal tender processes by the National Treasury to appoint doctors in the George and Boland areas through a closed bidding process. The process to be followed is to approach all doctors listed on the Health Professions Council of South Africato ensure that the process is fair and transparent.