Official reply: 08 June 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION 1274/2016**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**1274. Ms K de Kock (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) What are the full details of the procedure that needs to be followed by grant recipients when they note (a) unlawful, (b) fraudulent and/or (c) immoral debit deductions made from their SA Social Security Agency accounts;

(2) what steps is her department taking to communicate the specified procedure to all current grant recipients? NW1422E

**Reply:**

1. Any beneficiary noticing any (a) unlawful; (b) fraudulent and/or (c) immoral activity on his/her social grant must immediately report this to the nearest SASSA office. At the SASSA office, the beneficiary will be requested to complete an affidavit confirming that he/she did not purchase any advanced airtime, pre-paid electricity or take out a loan. This affidavit can be commissioned by the SASSA official attending to him/her. The SASSA official will then log the dispute and submit the affidavit to Cash Paymaster Services, to facilitate the refund of the money deducted and to blacklist that social grant account for any future purchases. In terms of the approved Dispute Resolution Mechanism, all cases must be dealt with within a time frame of 10 working days.

Alternatively, any beneficiary can call the SASSA toll free number 0800 60 10 11 and register a dispute. Again, that beneficiary will be requested to submit an affidavit confirming the dispute and that he/she did indeed not purchase any financial services or commodities. On receipt of the affidavit, SASSA will submit the dispute to Cash Paymaster Services, which has 10 working days in which to resolve the dispute.

1. SASSA has conducted a training programme for identified SASA staff within all provinces as well as those manning the call centre at Head Office, to ensure that they are aware of the procedures to be followed. The approved Dispute Resolution Mechanism has been made available to all staff as well as Cash Paymaster Services. In addition, SASSA is continuing with its communication programme through both print and electronic media (radio and television) to try to ensure that all beneficiaries are aware of the processes to follow, should they become aware of any untoward activity on their social grant.

SASSA is also appealing to community leaders and NGO’s to assist in directing any social grant beneficiary who may have experienced challenges with his/her social grant payment to the nearest SASSA office.

Notwithstanding these measures which have been put in place, notice should be taken of the amendments to the Regulations to the Social Assistance Act, Act 13 of 2004 which were published on 6 May 2016. These amendments make it clear that no deductions or EFT debit transactions, apart from these authorized in terms of the Regulation 26A for funeral policies which comply with the regulations, may be effected off the SASSA card account. This is effective immediately and should halt the type of challenges beneficiaries have been experiencing. Should any beneficiary with to have access to the stop order or debit order facility, that beneficiary will be required to open a commercial bank account, and request SASSA to transfer the social grant from the SASSA card account to the commercial bank account. This will be done at no cost to the beneficiary, who is then free to manage his/her bank account as he/she sees fit.