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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 2392**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 16 OCTOBER 2020**

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**2392. Ms L H Arries (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(a) What total number of foster care applications are still unprocessed in her department and (b) by what date does she intend to have all of the specified applications processed? NW2967E

**REPLY:**

(a) It should be noted that the National Department of Social Development does note process Foster Care applications but provinces do. The following provinces have the following total number of foster care applications that are still unprocessed:

**Eastern Cape:** The Eastern Cape Province has a total of 665 foster care applications that have not yet been processed as at end September 2020.

**Gauteng:** The Gauteng Province has a total of 4025 foster care applications that are still unprocessed.

**Limpopo:** The new intakes that the department has to date is 1 068.

**KZN:** The province of KwaZulu-Natal has a total of 1637 foster care applications that are still to be processed.

**Northern Cape:** There are 184 applications for foster care placements under investigation.

**Western Cape:** The total number of foster care applications unprocessed until 30th September 2020 1900.

The reasons for deviations for non-finalisation of foster care applications are as follows:

* Challenges in tracing birth parents.
* Outstanding birth certificates from the Department of Home Affairs.
* Delayed responses from the National Department of Social Development in issuing Form 30 due to impact of lockdown.
* Outstanding school reports. We do, however, acknowledge the notable support from the WCED during the COVID-19 lockdown period.
* Await court dates from the Department of Justice & CD to finalise court matters.
* High turnover of social workers in Designated Child Protection Organisations.
* Unmanageable high caseloads of social workers.
* The safety situation in communities making it impossible for social workers to render supervision services as legally required.
* Administrative demands requiring more support staff.
* Reconsolidation/verification of information with SASSA to update orders on SOCPEN and submitting to the Provincial Office on a weekly basis.
* Foster care applications pending finalisation.

(b) by what date does she intend to have all of the specified applications processed?

The provinces are to complete processing these applications as follows:

**Eastern Cape:** The applications will be processed by 31 December 2020.

**Gauteng:** The finalization of the foster care process is dependent on other Departments and prospective foster parents. As a result, it is not possible to indicate by when the cases will be finalised. In terms of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, the turnaround time for foster care applications is six (6) months.

**KZN:** The department intends to have all foster care applications processed by 30 January 2021.

**Limpopo:** It is difficult to anticipate the date for finalisation of cases since the Department depends on other departments to finalise but efforts are made to fast track the finalisation of cases in the best interest of the child.

**Mpumalanga:** The department has a turnaround time of 6 months to investigate and finalize foster care applications as per the department’s service standards. However, in cases where there are challenges (e.g. documentation, advertisements for unknown fathers etc.) the finalisation of the cases may take longer.

**Northern Cape:** All placements will be finalised by 30 January 2021.

**Western Cape:** The Department of Social Development is in the process of consulting with regions (DSD and NPOs) and the relevant stakeholders in foster care management regarding the finalisation of unprocessed foster care applications. A date for finalisation will be determined.

It is expected that the challenges presented with the inevitable lockdown period would have had a restrictive effect on operations overall in the public and private sector. Although the courts could still be accessed for urgent matters pertaining to children and specifically foster care matters, there were operational limitations caused by limited access to courts and other lockdown restrictions. Various role-players, including the state attorneys’ offices, legal advisors and counsel had to meet lockdown requirements. The co-dependent functionalities have been highlighted with the authorities concerned and redress is awaited.