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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 2433**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 40 - 2020**

**2433. Ms A L A Abrahams (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) With reference to her reply to question 1319 on 19 August 2020, what comparative progress has been made to reduce the backlog in each province of the (a) temporary disability and (b) care dependency grants that will lapse on 31 December 2020;

(2) what comparative progress has been made to employ doctors that are experienced in making such assessments in each province;

(3) what is the (a) current number of (i) disability and (ii) care dependency grant backlog and (b) total number of the specified grants that will lapse on 31 December 2020;

(4) what plans have (a) her department and (b) the SA Social Security Agency put in place to address the backlog? NW3041E

**REPLY:**

1. The backlog in the disability related grants is with new applications. The temporary disability grants and care dependency grants which will lapse at the end of December 2020 are all grants which were already in the system as at February 2020. The backlog of new applications reported in the response to Parliamentary question 1319 was 19 053. This has been reduced to 6 707 by end October 2020.

The provinces which still have a backlog of new applications are Gauteng with 1 282 and Mpumalanga with 277 and Western Cape with 5 148.

1. The numbers of doctors assisting with assessments is 472. This is 3 less than what was reported previously, as a result of 3 of the contracted doctors having passed away – 1 in Western Cape and 2 in KwaZulu-Natal. However, there are additional doctors from the Department of Health, particularly in the Western Cape Metro that are now assisting with assessments. Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape (for the Boland/Overberg and Eden/Karoo districts) are currently finalizing a procurement process to contract additional doctors to assist with the assessments.

Negotiations are also continuing with Provincial Departments of Health to identify additional medical officers who can assist with medical assessments. These discussions also extend to identifying facilities which can be used for assessments.

1. (a)(i) The number of temporary disability grants which will lapse at the end of December 2020 is 210 778.
2. The number of care dependency grants which will lapse at the end of December is 11 243.

(b) The total number of disability related grants which will lapse at the end of December is 222 021.

1. SASSA, with the Department of Social Development have been working on a plan to ensure that the beneficiaries who will be affected by the bulk lapsing have an opportunity to re-apply for the required grants by 31 March 2021.

Once care dependent children turn 18 years of age, their care dependency grants lapse, and they have to apply for a disability grant. This is because the care dependency grant is paid to a care giver of a severely disabled child, while a person over the age of 18 years is considered an adult, and must apply for the grant in his/her own name. For this reason, it cannot be an automatic conversion, but an application process.

However, in order to avoid the necessity for these young adults with severe disabilities to have to report to a SASSA office or health facility for a medical assessment and then to return at a later date to complete the application process, SASSA has developed a project plan to complete paper-based medical assessments, using the medical report already on file for the care dependency grant. The assessment will be done in the absence of the young person. This is provided for in the Social Assistance Act and can be implemented as there is a medical history for the applicant in SASSA’s possession.

Once the medical assessment has been completed, the care giver of the young person will be called in to the SASSA office on an appointment basis to complete the application as the procurator for the young person, in terms of Section 15 of the Social Assistance Act, 2004.

Measures have been put in place to manage cases where a medical report cannot be traced, or does not contain adequate information for the assessing doctor to make a recommendation, in order to manage risks associated with the process, and to ensure that SASSA can be accountable for decisions taken.

The above process will cater for the 11 243 care dependency grants which will lapse on 31 December 2020.

For the temporary disability grants, for those beneficiaries who are still unable to work as a result of the disability, assessments can start being scheduled in December already, with the application being done from January, since these can only be done once the temporary grant has lapsed. It should be borne in mind that a temporary disability grant is provided for a specific period only, because the assessment indicates that the condition can improve to the extent that it is not the disability which prevents the person from working. It is therefore not automatic that all those currently in receipt of the temporary disability grants will re-apply for the grant; or, if they apply, that they will qualify for the grant. A full application process, with a new assessment is thus required.

The process will be closely managed and all exceptions will be dealt with to ensure that inconvenience is limited as much as possible, and all who require access to services are attended to and people with disabilities are treated with care and respect.