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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 596**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 17 APRIL 2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 11 - 2020**

**596. Mrs D B Ngwenya (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

Whether, in view of the fact that an attempt to move social grant payments to different dates did not work, her department has considered going back to the previous normal dates and put practical measures around hygiene in place to assist grant recipients at pay points? NW787E

**National Assembly written Reply: 596 of 2020**

**REPLY:**

The measure implemented to limit the numbers of beneficiaries who try to access their grants on the day the money becomes available will not be reversed and the payment dates agreed with National Treasury for the remainder of the financial year will stand. This means that SASSA will continue with the split payment files as it is believed that the numbers would have been significantly higher had this split not been done.

The measures which will be implemented to try and manage the numbers of beneficiaries who access their social grants are as follows:

* The grant payments will continue in accordance with the dates as agreed with National Treasury (namely 3rd of each month for older persons and persons with disabilities and 5th of each month for all child grants – except where the 3rd and 5th respectively fall on a weekend or public holiday, in which case that specific date will be moved forward to the next working day after the 3rd or the 5th)
* Further splitting of the file between the older persons and persons with disabilities is being considered for the July payment cycle. (This cannot be done in June, as we are still finalising the development for the payment of the care givers grants as well as the special relief grant)
* Every beneficiary has their grant paid into a bank account – regardless of whether the account is with their personal bank or the SASSA/SAPO card account. Communication to advise beneficiaries of the fact that their card is a bank account and can be used as a debit card to swipe to pay for purchases and that there is no need to withdraw cash will be strengthened. The communication will also emphasize the fact that, once the grant is paid into the account, it will not be taken back if not utilised immediately.
* SASSA is negotiating with the banking sector to introduce additional mobile banking ATMs in rural areas in an effort to limit the numbers of beneficiaries who have to travel to towns to access their money. However, issues such as the availability of the infrastructure and security still have to be finalised.
* SASSA is also engaging the retail sector to see how they can assist. However, it should be understood that the banking and retail sector are not SASSA pay points – they are access channels through which beneficiaries and all other South Africans transact. All retailers have been implementing the relevant hygiene protocols in their stores, and have also dedicated additional till points specifically for older persons on the first few days of grant payments, in an effort to manage the numbers of beneficiaries. The challenge remains outside the stores, in malls and other points which is extremely difficult to control.
* SASSA is working with other stakeholders, including local authorities, to ensure that there are marshals at the busier access points to help with queue management and the maintenance of social distancing while waiting to access the retail outlets, bank ATMS and post office premises.
* In the Eastern Cape, negotiations have been undertaken with SAPO for them to utilise community halls to distribute the cash from, rather than some of their post offices which were not designed to cater for large number of beneficiaries. These community halls are used as extensions of the post office over the counter service and has really assisted to reduce the queues outside the facilities.
* Eastern Cape has also identified specific communities where there is a concentration of infections and arranged for SAPO to go to these areas, to prevent the beneficiaries from going into the towns – supporting the need to self-quarantine
* SASSA will continue to service the 1 740 cash pay points in the rural areas. At these pay points, hygiene protocols and social distancing is managed directly by SASSA and challenges have not been experienced.

An appeal is made to all in leadership positions to support SASSA in trying to limit the numbers of beneficiaries who go to the various access channels to access their grants.