Social Development updates portfolio committee on the new CSG Top Grant

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The Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) revealed in Parliament today that more than five thousand Child Support Grant Top-Up applications were processed by the end of July 2022. The two organisations appeared before the portfolio committee on social development to update  members of the Committee on the progress made on the Child Support Grant Top-Up and the Foster Child Grant; and the differences between the two provisions which are considered an important instrument of the social assistance programme in the country.   
  
The CSG Top Grant started operating as of 1 June 2022 and introduced a higher value for the Child Support Grant (CSG) which is R480 + R240 a total of R720 per month for orphans in the care of relatives and does not need a court order to access it.   
  
The introduction of the CSD Top up grant was part of the Department’s efforts to have a permanent comprehensive legal solution for foster care.   
  
Dr Maureen Mogotsi, Director: Children and Family benefits in the department informed members of the Committee that that the provision forms part of the social assistance program for children and seeks to ensure that income poverty is eliminated through a more transparent process which targets two categories of children namely orphans in the care of relatives, and orphans in child-headed households in terms of s137 of the Children’s Act, 38 of 2005.  
   
In differentiating the Child Support Grant Top Up from the Foster Child Grant, Dr Mogotsi indicated that the Child Support Top Up is not a new grant but builds on the existing Child Support Grant.  The primary objective of the Child Support Grant is to ensure that primary caregivers of children living in extreme poverty can access financial assistance to supplement household income whereas the objective of the Foster Child Grant is not primary poverty alleviation but to ensure that children who are in need of care and protection are well taken care of by the State. Therefore, the Child Support Grant Top Up does not replace the Foster Child Grant. The Foster Child Grant is provided for children who have been placed in the Foster Care System and can be extended until they are 21 years old if they are in school, tertiary education and this can be granted through a court order. Children who qualify for the Foster Child Grant should be declared to be in need care and support by a court of law.  
   
Dr Mogotsi said all  orphans already in the  foster care system will remain based on the court orders.   
  
This is because it is constitutionally regressive to take the provision away from children who are already receiving it. The Department does not intend to remove orphans already in the foster care system when they come up for their two-yearly review before the courts. There is a transitional clause in the Children’s Amendment Bill that is before the Committee that ensures the Magistrates in the Children’s Court, have a legal authority to extend the Foster Care Order.  
   
Children's grants are the largest provision of the South Africa’s social assistance programme as it covers over 13 million beneficiaries and is regarded as government’s most successful social protection intervention, and the Department is working on realizing the Comprehensive Legal Solution to address the Foster Care backlogs.  
   
The committee members were concerned about how the information on Top-Up Grant is reaching communities.   
“We make use of consultations and online means and radio campaigns to reach as many people as possible and most recently we were in the Western Cape and KZN,” explained Mogotsi.   
   
Updating the Committee on the issue of a Comprehensive Legal Solution for foster care, Legal Advisor of the Department of Social Development, Luyanda Mtshotshisa, said that the Department developed the Social Assistance Amendment Act and the Children’s Amendment Act respectively, “which have both been presented before your good selves.” Mtshotshisa also told the Committee that the Department will this coming Friday, attend a supervisory hearing whereby it will present progress on the Comprehensive Legal Solution and highlighted that, to his knowledge, there is no deviation from the court order by the department as the court would have indicated so when the department presents progress from time to time.   
   
Members of the Portfolio Committee welcomed the presentation by the Department and emphasised the importance of communicating the CSG Top-Up Grant by educating social workers and communities.

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