



## MEDIA STATEMENT

09 April 2020

### **Update by the Gauteng Provincial Command Council on measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact**

Gauteng province remains the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, with 782 of the 1 845 nationwide confirmed cases being in our province as of 08th April 2020.

This means that our province constitutes 42% of all confirmed COVID-19 cases in South Africa. We have lost three of our residents in the battle against COVID-19. We send our heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of the deceased.

Being the epicentre imposes a huge burden of responsibility on our shoulders. We must lead the fight against this invisible enemy, and we have to work together to save lives and contain the spread and impact of COVID-19.

Consequently, the Provincial Government has been working in partnership with all municipalities and various sectors of society to enforce the lockdown measures and mitigate the negative impact on the most vulnerable sections of our population.

A total of 8 005 Community Health Workers (CHWs) and 607 health professionals have been trained to trace contacts and conduct screening and testing.

We have up scaled community screening and testing. Since the 31st of March 2020, we have screened 26 841 people, 440 of the screened people who displayed symptoms, were referred for testing and were tested.

This intensive campaign was launched in Alexandra , Stjwetla, where 1 693 people were screened and 201 tested. Only one person tested positive and is currently under quarantine. We thank the people of Stjwetla for coming out and co-operating with government on this very important campaign of protecting their lives and those of others.

The screening campaign has now been rolled out in all five districts, namely,

Johannesburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Sedibeng and West Rand. The campaign is targeting areas where there is high density of contacts, whether in suburbs or townships, and areas of high vulnerability.

In terms of the regional breakdown of COVID-19 cases in Gauteng, as at 8th April 2020, Johannesburg has 440; Ekurhuleni 111; Tshwane 90; West Rand 12; and Sedibeng 6, with 123 cases being unallocated.

We have enhanced our capacity to trace contacts using technology and have traced 90% of all contacts. This is important in order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

We have also introduced a self-screening feature on the Gauteng Department of Health's Mpilo App, to ensure a seamless and easy screening by the public at their own convenience. Tracers are also using the Mpilo App to trace and monitor contacts and cases in the province. The contact tracing team developed an algorithm for screening, testing, follow up and linkage to health care for patients arriving at community testing sites.

In the Province, we currently have adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our health workers and we will continue to procure more to meet ongoing demand. One of our priorities is to ensure that our health workers are protected. We should all support them by ensuring that we use masks and gloves only when there is a need to.

To this end, we have met with all public service unions to brief them and they are all satisfied.

The provincial government is continuing to increase the number of beds that will be needed for all purposes. As we continue to create internal capacity, we have successfully decanted Tshwane District Hospital to become a COVID-19 facility. The hospital has 240 beds. Other facilities are being prepared to increase capacity.

With regards to food security, so far, we have worked with social partners to provide 15 000 food-insecure households with food. This amounts to almost 60 000 people.

In addition, we are providing homeless people with temporary shelter, food and sanitizers. We thank the NGO's and businesses for their generous donations and partnerships in helping us meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our society.

The provincial government has introduced several initiatives to encourage learners to work independently at home, under the supervision of parents or caregivers since the closing of schools on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, ahead of the lockdown. With the use of digital platforms and broadcast media, government has ensured that learners remain

meaningfully engaged during the lockdown period.

The Gauteng Provincial Government is deeply concerned by the spate of vandalism, arson and break-ins at public schools. Since the closing of schools in March, 22 public schools have been vandalised or burnt.

The provincial government urges the security cluster to investigate these incidents and ensure that the perpetrators are apprehended and face the full might of the law.

We are pleased to note that two people have been arrested for questioning in connection to school burglaries.

COVID-19 will have a devastating impact on the global economy, and that impact will also be felt by the provincial economy. We are working with national government and social partners to mitigate the negative impact of this pandemic on our economy.

In the management of the pandemic, there are new economic opportunities that will be created, and we will fully exploit them as we explore measures to mitigate the negative impact. More health professional jobs will be created, while sectors that are directly involved in the supply of equipment and services to the health sector will also see increased demand for goods and services.

Information systems in the public health sector require a massive upgrade. Medical files of patients should be electronic, so that irrespective of where the patient is in the country, their file is accessible through a centralized system of information storage.

In order to rapidly build the human capital base required by the health system, unemployed graduates and school leavers who can neither proceed to university level, nor repeat matriculation should be targeted. Unemployed youth can be trained into the profession, provided enough resources are made available.

The Gauteng Provincial Government expresses its appreciation to the millions of people of Gauteng who have observed and adhered to the regulations of the nation-wide lockdown. However, we are concerned that there are those who are not adhering to the regulations.

We are pleased with the work that law enforcement agencies have been doing throughout the Province to enforce the regulations, and bring to book those who are not complying.

The provincial government wishes to thank all workers engaged in essential services,

who have worked tirelessly throughout this period to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The health professionals, workers, emergency personnel, officers in security services - the police, traffic officers, military medical personnel, soldiers - have given their all to ensure that we succeed in our efforts to combat COVID-19.

We wish to reiterate the call to all Gauteng residents to play their part in the national efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We urge all South Africans to abide by the golden rules:

- Social distancing must be at least 1 metre away from other people
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with any person, or after contact with frequently touched surfaces
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin immediately
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Create a hygienic home, travel and work environment by cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

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**Issued by Gauteng Provincial Government**

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