



## social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### Director General

**ATTENTION:** All Heads of Provincial Departments of Social Development  
Managers and staff of early childhood development programmes  
Managers of early childhood development network organizations, training organizations, associations and similar entities  
Stakeholders in the early childhood development sector

### MEASURES RELATED TO THE OPERATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES UNDER COVID-19 ALERT LEVELS

1. The *Regulations issued in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2020* set out different alert levels for the country with associated measures to manage and mitigate the impact of COVID-19. These measures serve the purpose to ensure safety and protection of our citizens, in particular those who are vulnerable, including children.
2. Early Childhood Development programmes, including early childhood development centres, child minders (day mothers) play groups or similar, **shall remain closed** until such time that a decision is taken and communicated for their reopening under any of the five alert levels. The continued closure of these Early Childhood Development programmes is based on a consideration of multiple factors that include first and foremost the best interest of the child as contemplated in section 28(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the direct and potential risk of exposure to COVID-19 when young children gather in groups in Early Childhood Development programmes; and the compliance requirements in relation to the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and other Directions issued under the said Regulations, including the Department of Labour's *COVID-19 Direction on Health and Safety in the Workplace* published in Government Notice No 479 of 29 April 2020.
3. The Department of Social Development has embarked on a process together with the Department of Basic Education, Department of Health and a range of civil society stakeholders to look into the options, conditions, requirements and risks associated with the re-opening of Early Childhood Development programmes. The first engagement was on 26 May 2020 where eight workstreams (data, monitoring, assessment, support packages, protocols for re-opening, general COVID-19 awareness, programme re-design, practitioner training) were agreed upon and immediately commenced their work. This will provide important information regarding the measures and timing for the re-opening of Early Childhood Development programmes.
4. The Department of Social Development already informed the sector that those Early Childhood Development programmes that received funding through subsidy before 31 March 2020, shall continue to receive their funding in the 2020/2021 financial year for the duration of the lockdown's alert levels. The collective amount being paid annually towards this funding is R1.3 billion and the Department of Social Development appreciates the undertaking of the provincial Departments of Social Development to continue with these payments as it contributes to sustaining the sector during the period of lockdown.

5. The Department of Social Development encourages parents to continue to support the early learning and development of young children at home during this time. The Department together with the Department of Basic Education, UNICEF and the LEGO Foundation, and in partnership with the National Early Childhood Development Alliance (NECDA) and the South African Congress for Early Childhood Development developed and distributed the *Tshwaragano ka Bana: Let's play, learn and grow together* series in this regard and urge all partners and networks to help in sharing this with parents.
6. The Department of Social Development wishes to express appreciation to all stakeholders for their understanding and cooperation during these trying times, while we as a country together with the rest of the world fights the risks of the COVID-19 virus.

Yours sincerely,



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**Mr Linton Mchunu**

**Acting Director-General: Department of Social Department**

**Date:** 29/05/2020