

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WESTERN CAPE STRATEGY FOR IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES

September 2015

A. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

So far evidence suggests the following Western Cape Department of Social Development services pose a particularly high risk insofar as they are often falling short of statutory requirements and norms and standards:

- Foster care management (high rate of reports of social workers not visiting children placed in foster care, slow rate of extension of foster care orders, excessive social worker caseloads)
- Parenting agreements (increased incidence of reports to HOD's office of disputes over child custody due to informal arrangements where legally binding arrangements should be in place)
- Parenting plans (increased incidence of reports to HOD's office of disputes over child custody due to informal arrangements where legally binding arrangements should be in place)
- Mediation (certain NGOs refusing to implement mediation (Child Welfare for example) citing 'lack of training')
- Adoptions (extremely protracted processes, largely due to multi-agency dependency)
- Child protection due to neglect or abuse (repeated reports of poor follow-up rate by social workers on child protection cases, slow response time to reports of children at risk, poor responsiveness toward street child cases, and research evidence showing only 18% of form 22 reports (alleged child abuse or neglect) being finalised and reported via form 23s. Although this can be partly explained by changes in the forms used for these cases, it appears that there is still a problem of follow-through on these cases. The department's research unit is following up these findings to clarify the true extent of the problem, and to determine some of the root causes.

B. IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

Following a call for inputs from the various regional managers and programme managers in June 2015 to establish the various operational reasons for these areas of concern (both in DSD local offices and funded NGOs), a list of key blockages to effective child care and protection services was compiled. The issues identified are largely congruent with the Ministerial Committee on Foster Care's analysis of the problems in foster care country-wide.

The top 5 blockages to effective delivery in the Department's own local offices (SDAs) were identified as follows:

1. Shortage of Government Garage Vehicles (all metros, Eden Karoo) or inappropriate vehicles (Winelands)
2. Shortage of Social Workers (all regions) and social auxiliary workers linked to child care and protection social workers and canalisation officers, exacerbated by administrative workloads and inadequate admin support.
3. Lack of specific skills and knowledge re: Children's Act (all regions). This can partially be attributed to 'juniorization' of social work offices, and partly due to weak support, control, monitoring and accountability systems currently existing in both NGO and DSD rendered services to ensure social workers, social auxiliary workers and supervisors are aware of procedures, norms and standards, and to ensure that they adhere to these procedures, norms and standards, including proper supervision and support to front-line social workers.
4. Challenges with placements (lack of CYCC capacity, lack of knowledge of admission procedure among social workers, shortage of places of safety, shortages of safety parents)
5. Difficulties in co-operation of, and co-ordination with, NGOs rendering child care and protection services, as well as with other external stakeholders like the police and courts

Top 3 blockages to effective delivery among funded NGOs were identified as follows:

1. Departmental funding model and limitation on funding of administrative costs, non-social work posts, and other operating costs such as transportation, security etc. (similar to departmental challenges to some extent)
2. Lower salaries drive high staff turnover, resulting in cases falling through the cracks.
3. Low skill levels among social workers (common to departmental challenge number 3)

These priority areas are not an exhaustive list of the hurdles to effective services. Other, more complex challenges include the inherent complexity of the legislation, shortage of suitable safety parents, foster parents and adoptive parents, and the multi-institutional nature of its implementation, between the department of social

development, police, NGOs, courts and Home Affairs Department in some instances. However, the top priorities listed above in each instance are matters that the department has direct control over, and would be able to address relatively effectively with proper planning and implementation.

C. INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES

Addressing the top 5 blockages for own offices (SDAs and regions)

1. Shortage of GG Vehicles

Estimates of optimal numbers of GG vehicles have been collated for each region and Head Office. The necessary budget reprioritisation processes will be implemented by **HOD** in consultation with **Finance unit** to ensure as many of the necessary vehicles as possible are budgeted for and obtained during 2016/2017. The remainder to be obtained in the outer years of the MTEF as funds become available.

Region	Current number of vehicles	Required number of vehicles	Difference
Metro South	n/a	n/a	0
Metro North	41	45	4
Metro East	51	58	7
Winelands	66	75	9 (8 cars and 1 bakkie)
West Coast	40	47	7
Eden/Karoo	47	61	14
Head Office	Accessed via pool		Additional 20
Total			61

2. Shortage of social workers and support staff

The **Provincial Organisational Design** team is undertaking an assessment and review of regional and local office organisational structures in order to determine optimum staffing arrangements, including for front-line services and regional corporate/admin support services. The Department's **Internal Audit** team has been tasked with an assessment of the regional office processes to ascertain how these might be further optimised. Thereafter, **HOD and HR** will drive amendments to the organogram and posts will be funded as per availability of funding.

It has also become evident that the role of supervisors needs to be further refined and emphasised in performance agreements and performance assessment in order to ensure adequate support, mentoring and quality controls are in place for social work staff. The Western Cape's Implementation Plan for Generic Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services has identified the need to introduce supervisory agreements between supervisors and their social workers. It is envisaged

that this will be done by incorporating the key elements of this agreement into the PERMIS annual performance agreements between supervisors and their staff. In turn, this requirement for supervisors must be reflected in their PERMIS agreements with their Social Work managers. The responsibility for ensuring this will be done lies with **DSD HR, Regional Directors and their Social Work Managers.**

3. Lack of knowledge and skills in Children's Act

Significant amounts of training have been done already, but this does not seem to be yielding the desired results. As such, a different approach is contemplated. Department to draft succinct standard operating procedures for processes and procedures where compliance is weak. This will be done under the auspices of the Western Cape's implementation plan for Generic Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services:

- Assessment, therapeutic and statutory intervention of children potentially in need of care and protection
- temporary removal processes for children in need of care and protection – emergency removal vs court ordered removal
- foster care management –application, screening, finalisation of children's court enquiry (CCI's) through investigations, early intervention/therapeutic services, compile court report. follow-up visits and parenting support to biological and/or foster parents with the focus on reunification services, management of orders (extension, transfer, discharge), communication with SASSA and DSD local offices regarding fostercare grant.
- Fostercare canalisation services ensuring statutory obligations are adhered to – court order extension notifications to DSD and NGO social workers, updated Western Cape Regional and Provincial DSD foster care database, networking with DOJ regarding outstanding court orders (court registers used as monitoring tool), Networking with SASSA regarding review and update of DSD/SASSA databases.
- street children linked to safety parenting system, CYCC's and drop in centers as options of care and protection.
- parenting plans
- parental rights and responsibilities agreements

These processes must then be effectively communicated, built into Social Worker, Social Work Supervisor, Social Work Manager, and Regional Director performance agreements, and monitored accordingly:

Action	By who	By when
Design concise SOPs	HOD, Hester Bosman-Sadie and Business Planning, Regions (drawing on existing SOPs where possible)	End November 2015
Design communication	HOD and Business	End January 2016

materials.	Planning	
Compile a mailing list of all social workers, supervisors and managers providing child care and protection services per region.	HOD office – Tracy	End January 2016
Disseminate SOPs one per week (to avoid overloading social workers with information). Regions to obtain supervisor signatures to certify that they have been distributed to their social workers. Each regional director must ensure that they collect the signatures of all of the social worker managers in their SDAs for receipt of each standard operating procedure. These registers of receipt must be returned to the HOD's office for record keeping purposes. Thereafter, regular 'refresher' communication via emails to database.	HOD, regional directors, social work managers	Beginning from first week of Feb through to end March 2016
Standard operating procedures and Generic Norms that they require must be built into the performance agreements of social workers, social work supervisors, social work managers, and regional directors in time for the 2016/2017 performance cycle (already partly in place). See also point 2 above relating to supervisory agreements required in terms of the Generic Norms and Standards.	HOD, Annemie Van Reenen, Regional Directors	End March 2016
The department will establish an inspectorate for statutory compliance,	HOD, Annemie Van Reenen, MEC, Organisational Design	End January 2017

<p>which, in addition to its function of investigating exceptions, will perform random spot-checks on compliance with standard operating procedures and Generic Norms and Standards, both in Social Development's local offices, and in funded Child Care and Protection Organisations. Unit to develop monitoring tool for this purpose.</p>		
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4. Challenges with placements (lack of CYCC capacity, lack of knowledge of admission procedure among social workers, shortage of places of safety, shortages of safety parents)

Directorate for Facility Management is developing a centralised admissions process for Child and Youth Care Centres that should assist.

Directorate Children and Families together with the **Regional Managers** will be tasked with creating a plan to increase the number of safety parents on the Departmental database.

The **Directorate for Children and Families** together with the Department's **IT Support** is also working on ensuring that key personnel in DSD have access to SASSA's SOCPEN system to ensure that the department works off a consolidated database of children in foster care. Access to this data presents the opportunity for the Department's Regional Offices and the Programme Office to conduct oversight of foster care case management by departmental social workers and NGOs respectively after the children have been placed. The Department's **Knowledge Management unit** will be tasked with assessing the viability of such a system, and the resource and other requirements for its implementation.

5. Difficulties in co-operation of, and co-ordination with, NGOs rendering child care and protection services, as well as with other external stakeholders like the police and courts

Co-operation and communication between police and courts can be improved with effective stakeholder liaison between **regional directors** and the representatives of these institutions (magistrates, station commanders) on a regular basis. **HOD and HR** to include this specific item in Regional Directors' performance agreements, and evidence of meetings must be provided. The current regional structures where these three government departments already meet should be assessed for its current purpose and effectiveness.

For NGOs, the **Child Care and Protection Programme Office** must ensure that the TPAs include a clause stipulating that responsiveness to, and co-operation with regional officials on operational matters pertaining to child care and protection is a requirement. These should also be very clear about the NGO's specific geographic area of responsibility. The annual review of geographical areas of responsibilities must be enforced and agreed on between DSD regional office and NGO's operating in the specific region before allocation of funding of programmes and subsidisation of posts are approved. Current regional platforms where DSD local offices and NGO's meet on service delivery mandates should also be assessed for its purpose and effectiveness.

Addressing Top 3 blockages to effective delivery among funded NGOs

1. Departmental funding model and limitation on funding of administrative costs, non-social work posts, and other operating costs such as transportation, security etc.

As far as possible within budget constraints, continue to shift toward business plan basis for funding of child care and protection organisations by **programme office for Child Care and Protection**.

2. Lower salaries result in high staff turnover, resulting in cases falling through the cracks.

Major increase in post funding allocations already introduced. This will be sustained with above-inflation (6%) increases as far as possible in the forthcoming financial years.

3. Low skill levels among social workers (common to departmental challenge number 3)

For NGOs funded to render child care and protection services, the Generic Norms and Standards standard operating procedures developed by the Department for own services must be adapted and included in TPA contract conditions and appended to the TPAs by the **programme office for Child Care and Protection, with effect from beginning 2016 financial year. Existing M&E tool for the NGOs to be adapted and implemented accordingly.**

Approved by HOD:

Date: