

Free State health delivery improving, but there's more to do

The Free State has made commendable progress in implementing some of the suggestions made by the Nation Council of Provinces to improve healthcare delivery in the province. However, the Select Committee on Social Services, which was conducting a week-long oversight visit, said that more still needs to be done to reach an acceptable level in the quality of services and environment at healthcare facilities.



More ambulances

An additional 60 ambulances have been procured and will be delivered within the next two months to deal with the unacceptably high waiting time for emergency ambulances. The committee has urged the provincial government garage to speed up the process, so that the pool of vehicles serving the people is expanded.

Recruiting 220 emergency medical workers must be fast-tracked to ensure that when the vehicles are delivered there are people available to operate them. "We urged that when the vehicles are delivered, they are made functional as soon as possible," said Cathy Dlamini, the chairperson of the committee.

The committee was also impressed with the mobile clinics it saw at the government garage. It urged the speedy finalisation of the fittings, to ensure that the clinics are rolled out to far-flung areas.

The committee remains concerned by maintenance challenges at many facilities in the province and has called for the streamlining of processes and improved planning to ensure that infrastructure lifespan is prolonged. Furthermore, security facilities must be improved to safeguard equipment, medication and infrastructure. The plan to employ approximately 500 security guards is a welcome development and must be fast-tracked.

The procurement and dispatch of medical equipment is welcomed, but the department must ensure that all clinics and hospitals have adequate equipment to deliver quality services.

Redoubling efforts

The appointment of operational managers in many clinics will ensure effectiveness. "But we remain concerned about acting positions in other areas and the inability of the department to pay acting allowances. We have urged the provincial human resources department to offer strategic support to districts to ensure adherence to regulations," Dlamini said.

The province reported great improvement in the availability of medication, but the committee urged the department to further strengthen medication procurement process, to ensure that no facility experiences shortages.

The committee called for the strengthening of departmental monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that early warning systems are in place to deal with risks. Furthermore, the committee has called for the redoubling of efforts to ensure that all recommendations are implemented.

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