

Sexual offences courts' regulations finally gazetted

The long awaited regulations for sexual offences courts were signed and will be gazetted this week. On Thursday, Advocate Praise Kambula from the department confirmed that the regulations had been signed but said they were yet to set a date for implementation.

By [Barbara Maregele](#) 6 Feb 2020



The long awaited regulations for sexual offences courts were signed and will be gazetted by this week. Photo: Brian Turner via Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Rape Crisis, through its Rape Survivors' Justice [Campaign](#) (RSJC), has for several years been lobbying to force government to set up the specialised sexual offences courts by having the regulations signed into law.

Section 55A, the amendment to the Magistrates Courts Act, remained in limbo for several years, together with the regulations that would give it detail. The Department of Justice has now confirmed that the amendment to the Act came into operation on 31 January 2020 and that the regulations will be gazetted by February.

In a statement on Wednesday, Rape Crisis welcomed the regulations. "The signing of these regulations is a strong sign of President Cyril Ramaphosa's commitment to a stronger criminal justice system. The roll out of sexual offences courts and specialised forensic units promises a ray of hope for survivors of gender-based violence," the organisation said.

According to the regulations, sexual offences courts must have separate bathrooms and waiting rooms for victims, soundproof partitions, and anatomically correct dolls (for survivors to describe what happened), as well as access to a specialised court supporter, among other things.

Kathleen Dey, director of Rape Crisis, said that "having the regulations in place meant that rape survivors and organisations like her own were now able to monitor and hold government to account based on the checklists now included in the law".

Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development John Jeffery is expected to launch the Bredasdorp Sexual Offences Court in Bredasdorp on Friday.

In April 2018, Jeffrey told GroundUp that there was lots to be done as not all sexual offences courts were compliant even with the existing regulations.

“The more sexual offences that are reported, investigated and prosecuted, the more chance we will have stemming this violence in our society,” Rape Crisis said.

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