

Media sector next in line to receive Covid-19 vaccines

The South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) welcomes the government's decision to follow through on its promise to prioritise journalists in the country's vaccine rollout programme.



Source: www.pexels.com

Journalists, as designated frontline workers have risked their lives every day for the past 16 months, working throughout the pandemic as part of their responsibility to the public.

Even during the different peaks of the pandemic, they have not had the option to suspend work or work from home because of the nature of their work and the critical service they provide.

They have traversed the country, going to hospitals, clinics, vaccination sites, mass rallies, press conferences etc. to reflect on the pandemic, in service to the country to ensure that the public is adequately informed.

On Monday, 28 June 2021, the government informed Sanef that journalists will be next in line as soon as all media houses submit their information regarding their employees' age groups and regions where they are stationed. All community media establishments around the country including freelance journalists will also receive forms that they must complete and submit to Government Communications and Information System (GCIS).

All categories of media workers

Sanef particularly appreciates the government's decision to not only inoculate frontline journalists but to accommodate all categories of media workers as the government wants to target and deal with the media as a sector than a selected group.

Details about the programme and what needs to be done to get the whole sector vaccinated will be forthcoming. We call on all journalists and the media fraternity to vaccinate so that the government can quickly move onto the next priority sectors.

In January this year, Sanef made an impassioned plea to the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) for journalists to be on the list of essential workers and be prioritised in the second phase of the rollout. Sanef also lobbied President Cyril Ramaphosa, pleading the case for journalists to be considered for vaccination. Sanef was extremely concerned that without a plan to vaccinate journalists, they will continue to get infected by the disease. The Forum argued that, like other frontline workers, journalists posed a serious threat to their families and that this had an equally daunting impact on the state of their mental health.

It was observed that small newsrooms battle with the job's demands as their colleagues have been infected in the line of duty and are forced to isolate. Despite the risk, they remained committed to the cause, going beyond the call of duty as the nation struggles through these unprecedented times.

Sanef wishes to thank all journalists for patiently waiting for their turn, as the government rightfully prioritised health care workers, pensioners and now educators.

While many industries have scaled back operations, journalists remain needed even more now more than ever and will be out in the field to report on the now highly transmissible Delta variant, thought to be twice as contagious than the Beta strain of the virus.

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