

State to examine problems in foster care provision

The Department of Social Development has appointed a Ministerial Committee to assist it to deal with the challenges facing foster care facilities in South Africa.



Social Development Minister Bathabile Dlamini has appointed a Ministerial Committee to examine the functioning and efficiency of the foster care system in South Africa. Image: GQIS

The 24-member committee will investigate the backlog of foster care applications and lapsed foster care orders in line with existing laws while ensure that the best interests of the children are taken into account.

The Committee is expected to consult with the respective provincial heads of Social Development and SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) regarding the foster care programme; conduct a gap analysis of the available psychosocial programmes within the social welfare programme that should be accessed by foster children and then provide a report to the Minister, Bathabile Dlamini with recommendations and policy options.

The committee will be chaired by former Deputy Minister of Social Development, Maria Ntuli.

Dlamini said that since the promulgation of the Children's Act of 2005 it has become increasingly apparent that the growing demand for foster care has created significant challenges for the system. She said this was partly due to the impact of HIV and Aids and the limited resources of government to meet the increasing demand for foster care.

She said the Ministerial Committee is part of the implementation of the national strategy on foster care allowing for more rapid and innovative response to challenges facing society.

"The committee will determine what factors contribute to or undermine the foster care system and the make its recommendations within 18 months," Dlamini said.

Staff, placement challenges remain

Some of the challenges in foster care placements include the shortage of social workers and social work supervisors, which make it difficult to implement the Children's Act, as well as high levels of staff turnover for both NGOs and the department, putting an extra case load strain on those left to do the work.

Since 2010, the department has engaged the Justice, Health, Home Affairs and Education Departments, as well as the NGO sector with the view to:

- Eradicating the backlog of lapsed foster care orders;
- Determining the extent of foster care services for foster children;
- Evaluating the foster care programme in its current state;
- Making recommendations for improvement.

Dlamini said that a national integrated plan for foster care had been adopted and will be implemented in three phases:

- Phase One will what foster grants are being paid and what grants have lapsed. This involves direct contact with each family to confirm the care arrangements for the foster child or children;
- Phase Two will focus on extending current foster care to eliminate any backlog and ensure compliance with the court



Children in foster care, walking home in the township where they live. Reliance on foster care has increased almost three-fold since 200,000 partly because of the ravages of HIV and AIDS. Image: [Paths](#)

order from May 2011 made by the North Gauteng High Court to ensure the state meets its foster care responsibilities;

- Phase three will see the department conducting an audit of the entire foster care programme.

Deputy Minister Ntuli said it is an honour to be part of the foster care committee that will look after the poverty stricken children in South Africa.

"The committee is here to see we bring change into the lives of little children. We are taking this responsibility seriously." she said.

Currently the number of children receiving foster child grants has increased from about 200,000 in the 2000 to over 553,000 now, a rise of almost three-fold.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>