

Gauteng Health in search of 16 Life Esidimeni patients

The Gauteng Health Department has traced five more Life Esidimeni patients, bringing down the number of unaccounted patients to 16.



Gauteng Health MEC, Gwen Ramokgopa

“I am encouraged by the progress Dr Kobie Marais and her team are making and reaffirm our determination to continue working relentlessly to leave no stone unturned, doing all in our power and sparing no effort until each of the outstanding unaccounted for on the list is traced,” said Health MEC Gwen Ramokgopa.

According to the Gauteng Health Department’s own records, there were 55 unlocated mental health care users in January 2018.

This was reduced to 16 by February 2019 following concerted joint efforts between stakeholders.

These included non-governmental organisations (NGOs); the Social Development Department; the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa); private healthcare facilities, Gauteng hospitals and the Home Affairs Department.

“I have personally visited some of the users and their families and some were not aware that there were discrepancies in either name, addresses or even a lack of identity numbers on the records of Life Esidimeni given to the department.

"We are eternally grateful to all stakeholders for their hard work which has seen us making significant progress with the tracing efforts thus far," said the MEC.

The Gauteng Health MEC said most of these users who were recently found were at new addresses where they had moved with their families. Others were re-admitted to special mental health facilities.

"The department calls on all families and guardians to update contacts with the relevant institutions when such change.

"I remain optimistic that our task of accounting for all clients will be conducted soonest as we follow up with the SAPS and use any other records," said Ramokgopa.

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