

TO: ALL MEDIA
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KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health and the South Africa police services share ideas on caring for the mentally ill

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is hosting a workshop with the South African Police Services today, 26 February 2009, to share ideas and expertise in caring for and handling of mentally ill persons.

The workshop, which is held at the South African Police Service Provincial Headquarters (19 Ordinance Road) is as a result of the recently enacted Act, Mental Health Care Act of 2002, which requires close cooperation between the health care workers and policemen and women in caring for and handling of mentally ill persons. The workshop seeks to; (i) brief the SAPS on the Mental Health Care Act, (ii) define roles and responsibilities, and (iii) adopt an action plan that would enhance cooperation in caring for and handling mentally ill persons.

The workshop is going to be addressed by specialists in the field of Psychiatry from the health institutions and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Chairperson of the Mental Health Review Board, Mr. M. Nofomela, addressing the workshop stated that; "The continued neglect of mentally ill persons under apartheid and in the current era is a matter of grave concern. Whilst our constitution assures the human rights of all citizens, there has been no recognition of the rights of the mentally ill persons. The continued neglect, gross abuse, disrespect of mentally ill persons needs to be fought at all fronts."

Dr S Ramlall (Principal Specialist) from King George V Hospital indicated that there has been much progress in legislating the human rights approach to caring for the mentally ill patients. "In terms of the ten (10) basic principles of mental health care law we are amongst the most advanced in complying with these." In her conclusion, she quoted from the Psychiatry Journal which asserted; "A critical word in the Act's title is "care". This must be our guiding ethos, care for the patient. But for care to be effectively delivered it must go beyond an attitude and must encompass a comprehensive vision....sensitive to the needs of the population being served."

The Departments agreed to communicate a single message; there is hope and there is help!

ENDS!