

TO: ALL MEDIA
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MEC Dhlomo warns young people against the adverse effects of STIs and pregnancies during this month of "love"

During the time whereby many young people will be celebrating Valentine's Day on the 14th of February 2014 (a day that is celebrated worldwide and is associated with "love" and whereby lovers express their love for each other in various ways), the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the other hand is on an awareness campaign; cautioning young people on the adverse effects of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) and pregnancies. MEC Dhlomo is driving this awareness campaign as part of the STI/Condom Awareness Week and Pregnancy Awareness Week which runs from the 10th to the 16th of February 2014.

The KZN Department of Health is concerned about the increasing rate of teenage pregnancies, despite its efforts and interventions in dealing with this matter. MEC Dhlomo appeals to all young people, parents, teachers, community leaders and the community at large, to work with the Department in curbing the rate of teenage pregnancies. It is most common that young girls go into sexual relationships, especially with older men; for financial gains. These girls end up being pregnant at an early age and in some other cases end up with Sexually Transmitted Diseases. MEC Dhlomo warns all young girls and says "when you get pregnant whilst still young, you are posing a risk to your health, as your bodies are still not yet fully developed to carry a baby. Being pregnant at such an early age may cause future complications to your bodies and health".

MEC Dhlomo further warns all young people against the adverse effects of STIs on their health. He indicates that when you engage in unprotected sex, you are at risk of contracting STIs, inclusive of HIV and AIDS. He cautions young boys and girls not to engage themselves in sexual relationships, but rather focus on schooling to build a bright future for themselves. "Your priority is to get an education and necessary skills to build your future. You are still very young to worry yourselves about relationships. You need to wait for the right time. When you are matured enough to understand what you involve yourselves in, only then can you think about relationships. As Government, we want to produce future doctors, nurses, psychologists, dieticians, therapists and many other healthcare professionals from yourselves; who will go out there and serve our communities. However, as Government we cannot do it alone. We need you to make the right choices and take responsibility for your health" said MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

For further enquiries please contact:

Ms Sebe Zwane – 0714750662 or sebe.zwane@kznhealth.gov.za
ENDS.

ISSUED BY: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, KWAZULU-NATAL