

Launch of adolescent and youth friendly services at Swart Umfolozi Clinic

'The only solution to curbing the rising rate of teenage pregnancy and illegal abortions lies with the establishment of Youth and Adolescent Friendly Health Institutions,' says KZN Health MEC. The launch took place at Swart Umfolozi Clinic at Zululand which was sighted as exemplary by MEC. This facility in its quest to accommodate the youth goes to an extent of providing its facilities as venue for youth dialogue; educational movie screenings and other youth driven activities.

In launching this youth friendly initiative Dhlomo echoed what the Deputy President, His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa, said during the commemoration of the 2015 World Aids Day, when he said: 'The number of new HIV infections is still extremely high, particularly among young women and girls. We are told that more than 2,300 girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 24 become infected with HIV each week.'

Dhlomo says the Department of Health, has no choice but expected to tailor-make most of its programmes to respond to the needs of the youth, especially young girls.

He says health workers need to fathom that if the youth is not treated in the manner that befits their expectations; they then rely on uninformed advice or help of their peers – usually with disastrous consequences!

'A case in point is when a 16 year old girl presents herself at the clinic asking for contraceptives; it not a duty of the NURSE to rebuke; spite and chastens her; but to duly assist. Failure to help can result in this girl coming back later with Sexually Transmitted Infection or being HIV Positive or worse; complicating from an illegal abortion attempt.'

Dhlomo also tabulated what health workers need to adhere to in making their facilities youth friendly; sighting the following:

- Are young people welcomed at health care facilities by a friendly face?
- Are services available at hours that are convenient to a young person (e.g. outside of school hours)?
- Can a young person be confident that the sensitive issues they discuss will be kept confidential and that their privacy will not be violated?
- Can they access a wide range of services without parental permission?
- Do they have the option to see the same provider in subsequent visits so that he/she will be familiar with their personal history?
- Do we have information, educational sessions and communication materials to promote healthy behaviours for young people

He emphasised that health workers at all levels, whether District, Hospital, Clinic or War Room settings have a duty to provide comprehensive health service package to young people closer to where they reside.

'When we talk about comprehensive service package for Adolescent and Youth Friendly Clinics, we mean the provision of:

- Education and counselling on sexuality, safer sex and reproductive health
- Sexually Transmitted Infections education; diagnosis and management.
- HIV education, diagnosis and testing as well as treatment, care and support
- Contraceptive education and provision with an emphasis on dual-protection method
- Pregnancy testing, antenatal and postnatal care, as well as,
- Mental health education and counselling.

'Dhlomo says he will do everything possible to ensure that all clinics especially in rural setting have a youth friendly champion nurse who the youth can trust for their health related issues.



From Left, Sister Simangele Zondo – Swart Umfolozi Clinic Manager, MEC Dhlomo, Embangisweni Tribal Court Inkosi- Ndabezitha Douglas Zondo, Zululand District Deputy Mayor – Cllr Esther Qwabe

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