

MEDIA RELEASE
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KZN Health MEC urges the public, including youth, to avoid costly mistakes during festive season

With the dawn of the December holidays, KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has urged the public, including young people, to exercise caution and avoid costly mistakes during the festive season.

The festive holiday period means that many young people will have a lot of time on their hands. Left unchecked, some of them may experiment with potentially dangerous things, such as substance abuse and unprotected sex – often with far-reaching consequences.

“As a Department, we always encourage abstinence from sex for as long as possible – until one is physically and psychologically ready to deal with its consequences. For those who cannot abstain from sex, we encourage the use of Dual Protection, which promotes Medical Male Circumcision and the use of female contraceptive methods – while using condoms during every episode of sexual contact. This ensures protection against both sexually transmitted infections - including HIV - and unwanted pregnancies.

“Substance abuse also has a detrimental effect on people’s lives. Among other things, it impairs judgement and makes it easy for people to engage in unprotected sex. It also has a negative impact on mental health. These are all the things that can change a young person’s life in an adverse way, forever. So they must be avoided at all costs.”

The MEC’s warning comes after he launched the Adolescent and Youth User-Friendly health initiative at Swart Umfolozi Clinic, in Zululand, last week.

In launching this initiative, Dr Dhlomo echoed the sentiments of Deputy President, His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa, 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 to ensure that its programmes respond to the needs of the youth, especially young girls.

He says health workers need to understand that if the youth is not treated in the manner that makes them feel welcome to seek health services; they then rely on uninformed advice or the help of their peers – usually with disastrous consequences.

“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,” Dr Dhlomo adds.

During this period, KZN also experiences a remarkable influx of road usage and traffic congestion. This, by people who have returned home from places of work outside of the province, as well as holiday-makers entering the province, or travellers within the province.

Unfortunately, this also leads to an increase in the number of incidents of trauma and fatalities resulting from road crashes, violence and drownings.

It has been proven that most road accidents happen as a result of human error, including failure to adhere to road traffic rules. During this time, communities also experience a heightened incidence of

social ills and crimes, which lead to violence and trauma.

These incidents exert pressure on government resources as a result of people having to be treated in government hospitals and those who require rehabilitation; and in other cases, people having to receive social grants - let alone those who pay the ultimate price - death.

Dr Dhlomo says: "What we all need to remember is that things do not have to be this way. The time has come for all road users to exercise caution – on the roads, at home and on the streets – by staying on the right side of the law. It starts with you, by doing the little things, really; like not drinking and driving; and by always ensuring that their vehicles are not overloaded and are always roadworthy. It is these little things that will result in savings of health resources."

ENDS

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