

27 May 2016

Together lets promote the safety and wellbeing of our children

“For us, the duty to protect children starts from birth and during each and every point in their lives when they need healthcare” says MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo

Kwa-Zulu Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, calls upon all citizens of KwaZulu Natal (KZN) to play their part in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children. Dhlomo makes this plea as South Africa celebrates Child Protection Week, starting today 27 May 2016 to the 04th of June 2016.

The main thrust of the National Child Protection Week is to raise awareness of the rights of children as articulated in the children’s Act of 2005. In South Africa, children live in a society with a constitution that has the highest regard for their rights. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, states that Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, health care and social services, as well as the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.

The theme for this year is “let us all protect children to move South Africa forward”

The KZN Department of health has numerous programmes that offer essential services to children to aid their wellbeing and development. Our responsibility is not only limited to ensuring a healthy delivery and administering immunisations, but is a journey with children right up to adolescence. Ensuring good and healthy development of all children is of great cognisance to the Department.

The Department has 552 Phila Mntwana Centres to promote and improve monthly growth monitoring, education on oral rehydration to treat diarrhoea, support for breastfeeding and identification of children with incomplete immunisation schedules. Added to this is the accreditation of neonatal services to ensure high quality of neonatal care is also on-going. All the hospitals have intensive programmes for improving the skills and competencies of staff in the management of paediatric conditions.

The province also has a strategy to improve service around Polio vaccinations. MEC Dhlomo speaks about immunization as a fundamental part of child protection and child health care and he says “Immunization is the single most important way parents can protect their children from serious diseases, this makes the decision to immunize your child an important one”.

Through our School Based Preventative Oral Health Programmes, 135 148 children have been attended to, in the school based brushing programme. Almost 202 Community Service Officers made of Dentists, Audiologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Speech Therapists have been deployed to our institutions solely to improve access to rehabilitation, oral and dental health. These services are also made available to school children as they grow.

The Department’s quest to ensure healthcare services for this important group of our population, has further been bolstered by the construction of the KZN Children’s Hospital which will be completed in 2018. For many years the Western Cape through its Red Cross Children’s Hospital, has hoisted the flag in terms of being the only province with a hospital that has a specialised level of care for children. Now KZN is set to boast its own hospital . The KZN Department of Health urges everyone to wear a green ribbon during Child Protection Week as a symbol to show support for promotion of rights, care and protection of

children. Wearing the green ribbon helps victims and survivors know that we are united in their support; it emphasizes the importance of partnerships to tackle child abuse, neglect and exploitation.

For general support in cases of children, the community is advised to liaise with the following Departments:

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: 0800 60 10 11

CHILDLINE SA 0800 05 55 55

POLICE EMERFENCY LINE: 10 111

Protecting children is everyone's business. Let us do it.

ENDS