

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the EMS College of Emergency Care; Graduation ceremony for class of 2012

12 July 2013

EMS General Manager – Mr K Sithole

EMS College Principal - Mrs Mfeka and management

Dear parents

Graduates

We thank and recognise the sterling work done by our Emergency Medical Services College in up-skilling emergency care officers employed within the Department of Health in the province. We highly appreciate the fact that graduates come out equipped with more skills to improve the health care of patients.

Today is a very important day as we are assembled here together with parents to say congratulation to all of you for having made good use of the opportunity offered.

We are very excited that those amongst you who had a Basic Life Support are now practicing within the Intermediate Life Support scope having successfully completed your training and fully registered with the HPCSA as well. We are saying congratulation to all the **88 leaners** that were enrolled in 2012. This qualification indeed allows you to provide improved quality emergency medical care to the community. I appreciate that the most rural Districts have been generously catered for in terms of distribution:

- 19-Sisonke
- 14-Zululand
- 8-Ugu
- 7-Umzinyathi
- 7-Amajuba
- 7-Ethekwini
- 6-UThungulu
- 6-UThukela
- 5-UMgungundlovu
- 5-UMkhanyakude, and
- 4-Ilembe

We just decry the fact that of the 88 graduates there are only 25 females compared to 63 males in the group.

Programme Director, it should also be remembered that in our country's preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup a number of people were trained and engaged to provide services. As is a fact, after the tournament these people were laid off. As a Department of Health in KZN we then initiated a poverty alleviation programme, which we named Project 148 that involved enrolment of unemployed, enthusiastic young matriculants in the province to gain access into the emergency care profession through an internship programme.

Today we are happy to announce that those candidates underwent a well packaged Basic Ambulance Assistant course which is different from any other

in the whole country in that, it included additional skills programmes i.e. Batho Pele principles; Defensive driver training; Radio communication and Computer literacy. Over and above that, the department of health awarded these candidates an opportunity to get hands-on experience at various EMS stations closest to their homes while through the twelve month period they receive a stipend which has gone a long way in bettering the lives of their families.

From this programme, 54 candidates are graduating today and we are proud of the fact that they have also all been registered with the HPCSA. We just hope that with this qualification, registration with the HPCSA, practical experience and added skills acquired; these young people will get full time employment and do well in their careers. From this group we have 54 graduates consisting of 25 females and 29 males from six districts in the province:

- 32-Umgungundlovu
- 7-Ugu
- 6-Ethekwini
- 4-Uthukela
- 3-Ilembe and
- 2-Amajuba

We also have a pleasure to announce that already four of these candidates have been offered full time positions in EMS and that the remainder are in the process of gathering other relevant documentation required for full time employment.

We are also happy that amongst this group there are some who have expressed interest in furthering their studies within the EMS profession and have already applied to the Durban University of Technology to enrol on the Bachelor of Health Science degree in Emergency Medical Care for the 2014 academic year. I am happy that the College Principal, Mrs Mfeka, has committed to assist these candidates to obtain bursaries we offer as a Department.

Again I take this opportunity to thank the management of our College for all the good work and commitment that has seen this EMS College, in January 2013 becoming the first and only Emergency Medical Care training provider in the Province to be accredited by the HPCSA to conduct the 2year mid-level worker programme (Emergency Care Technician - ECT). We are now one of the five provincial colleges in the country to be accredited for this programme.

We are also excited that already 20 in-service learners have been enrolled in February 2013 and are expected to complete their training in December 2014. A further intake of 30 learners will be done annually from January 2014. With all these Advanced Life Support interventions, we are guaranteed to have a force that will significantly improve the quality of pre-hospital patient care especially in the rural communities.

Ladies and gentlemen and fellow compatriots; as we celebrate these achievements; I would like us all to appreciate the fact that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a core service delivery unit within our Department and that it is at the front line of health service delivery.

The broad aims of this Service are twofold and entail the following:

- **Emergency Patient Transport**, which includes inter-facility transfers and emergency response to public for, stabilization of, and transportation of patients, involved in trauma, medical emergencies, maternal and other emergencies through the utilization of specialized vehicles, equipment and skilled Emergency Care practitioners.
- **Patient Transport Services**, which includes non-emergency referrals between hospitals and hospitals and clinics to hospitals for indigent persons with no other means of transport.

As a Department, we are about ensuring “a long and healthy life for all South Africans” and that has to be achieved and measured in four specific areas which are:

- **Improve life expectancy**
- **Improve mother and child health and survival**
- **Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and TB**
- **Improve health system effectiveness**

Emergency Medical Services as one of the three core pillars in health service delivery standing alongside primary health care (PHC) and hospital services is thus crucial in the attainment of the above.

The paramedics are our first point of entry as they are medical professionals who provide medical care to patients en route to hospitals or other medical facilities.

They are the first on the scene of an accident where they are expected to quickly assess the situation and determine the proper course of action for each patient.

They accompany the patient to the hospital or medical facility making sure that the patient maintains his or her condition of stability during the ambulance ride.

They are trained to drive what is in effect a mobile emergency clinic and to resuscitate and or stabilise patients using sophisticated techniques, equipment and drugs.

The doctors and nurses at hand over hospitals rely and depend on their report in as far as the condition in which the patient was found and also medical attention already given.

They work shifts, including evenings and weekends, going out in all weather conditions and terrains.

The holiday season to them is never a time of joy as they have to be away from their families dealing with road carnages and the people who mercilessly maim each other when under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Paramedics are an unarmed para-military unit that has at all times display a high level of discipline in terms of punctuality; approach and dress code.

They operate under the auspices of an Oath.

PARAMEDIC PLEDGE AND OATH:

Be it pledged as an Emergency Care Personnel, I will honour the physical and judicial laws of God and man.

I will not follow that regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of patients and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, nor shall I suggest any such counsel.

Into whatever homes I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of only the sick and injured, never revealing what I see or hear in the lives of men unless required by law.

I shall also share my medical knowledge with those who may benefit from what I have learned. I will serve unselfishly and continuously in order to help make a better world for all mankind.

While I continue to keep this oath unviolated; may it be granted to me to enjoy life, and the practice of the art, respected by all men, in all times,

**Should I trespass or violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot.
So help me God.**