



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement
Western Cape Provincial Parliament
IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

1 March 2022 (09:00), Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

THEME: Protection of the vulnerable

ATTENDANCE

Members:

Members:

Democratic Alliance

Allen, RI
America, D
Bartman, D
Botha, LJ
Bosman, G
Philander, WF
Van der Westhuizen, AP
Wenger, MM (Chairperson)

African National Congress

Dugmore, CM
Windvogel, R

Economic Freedom Fighters

Xego, M

Freedom Front Plus

Marais, PJ

Alternate Members

Plato, D (DA)
Maseko, M (DA)
Nkondlo, N (ANC)

Additional Member

Brinkhuis, G (Al Jama-Ah)

Apology

Christians, F (ACDP)

WCPP staff

Ms. W Hassen-Moosa, Procedural Officer
Ms. S Jones, Procedural Officer
Mr. B Daza, Senior Procedural Officer
Ms. MA Burgess, Committee Assistant

The following persons were in attendance:

The Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

Ms. L Lake, Series Editor, Communication and Education Specialist, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town
Ms. H Buys, Associate Professor, Head of Clinical Unit, Ambulatory & Emergency Pediatrics Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital and Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, University of Cape Town
Dr. T Wessels, District Pediatrician, Metro East, Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, Tygerberg Hospital, Senior lecturer, Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, Stellenbosch University
Dr. M Hendricks, Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, University of Cape Town
Prof. M Tomlinson, Co-Director: Institute for Life Course Health Research, Department of Global Health, Stellenbosch University
Dr. P Silbert, Project Manager, Schools Improvement Initiative, Schools Development Unit, University of Cape Town
Ms. T Mzozoyana, Social Worker, Schools Improvement Initiative, Schools Development Unit, University of Cape Town

1. Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the Members of the Committee, representatives of the Children's Institute from the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, members of the public and the media in attendance.

The Chairperson acknowledged an apology from Member F Christians.

The Chairperson explained the rules of engagement to Members and officials in respect of virtual meetings and then proceeded to the presentations.

Ms Lake provided an overview of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and families in the province.

2. Briefing on Children and COVID-19 advocacy briefs

Ms. Lake briefed the Committee on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children in the Western Cape. She elaborated on the issues that developed during the Covid-19 and lockdown across seven domains. Further discussions were held on the COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Lake for the presentation.

3. Briefing on child-centred COVID-19 care

Ms. Buys briefed the Committee on Child-centred COVID-19 care with specific reference to how children and their families were affected by illness, loss of income and the death of family members. She elaborated on how children's needs became secondary to those of adults and how resources were diverted from paediatrics to adult COVID-19 care. Further discussions were held on the avocation of more child- and family-centred approach for children in hospitals in order to minimise stress and to improve patient wellbeing.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Buys for the presentation.

4. Briefing on the disruption of routine health services

Dr. Wessels briefed the Committee on the importance of maintaining routine child health services to ensure that the overall health of children is not compromised. She stated that leadership and advocacy for child health is needed at every level of the health care system to protect, sustain and rebuild child health services. Further discussions were held on the adequateness of surveillance systems to identify children at risk and on how to optimise the use of community health workers in maternal and child health to reach out and bridge the gap between communities and health services.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Wessels for the presentation.

5. Briefing on nutrition and food security

Ms. Lake briefed the Committee on the effects of COVID-19 on impoverished households. She elaborated on the increased amount of children that suffer from malnutrition and how the consumption of specific food groups could lead to obesity which eventually results in adult chronic illness e.g. diabetes and heart disease amongst others. She advised that the disruption of routine health services made it harder to identify and support children at risk of acute malnutrition. She indicated that by utilising taxes, subsidies and price controls a limit could be placed on food price inflation. She recommended that measures be introduced to alleviate hunger e.g. school meals and food parcels which are nutritionally balanced and do not increase the burden of over nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. As a last resort she recommended that fast food retailers be limited.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Lake for the presentation.

6. Briefing on violence and injury

Ms. Mathews briefed the Committee on violence against women and children in the home during the COVID-19 lockdown period. She informed the Committee of the concerns raised by child rights activists on how rising unemployment, food insecurity and the stresses of lockdown increased risk of violence and injury in the home. She stated that a disruption of social and child protection services made it harder for women and children to access critical services. She recommended that child protection as an essential service be established and that local response teams facilitate access to the support services at community level. She also advised that there should be collaboration amongst health, education and child protection services schools, early childhood development programmes, health facilities and contact tracing teams to identify and respond to cases of violence and abuse.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Mathews for the presentation.

7. Briefing on mental health

Professor Tomlinson briefed the Committee on child and adolescent mental health. His presentation covered the effects of unemployment, food insecurity, domestic violence and an increased burden of childcare on women. He advised on the importance of capacity build of families and frontline workers in schools, early childhood development programmes and health care services to help children cope. Further discussions were held on environmental threats to the current health and future well-being of children and the commercial threats through the marketing of harmful substances.

The Committee deliberated on the presentation.

The Chairperson thanked Professor Tomlinson for the presentation.

8. Briefing on schools as nodes of care and support

Dr. Silbert and Ms. Mzozoyana briefed the Committee on the effects of COVID-19 on the school system. They elaborated on the need for schools to become a haven for children that is safe and secure. That educators create opportunities for children to confide their problems and challenges particularly during periods of adversity. They indicated that teachers need to have a basic understanding of mental illness in order to grasp how trauma affects self-esteem, behaviour and interpersonal relationships. That people need to move away from the stigma and ignorance of trauma, towards normalising children's experiences associated with mental illness.

The Committee deliberated on the presentations.

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Silbert and Ms. Mzozoyana for the presentation.

9. Consideration and adoption of the Draft Committee documents

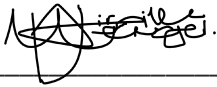
The Chairperson tabled the Draft Minutes of 1 December 2020 which were considered and adopted with amendments.

The Chairperson tabled the Draft Committee Report for Committee Activities for December 2021. The draft report was considered and adopted without amendments.

10. Resolutions

Members were requested to submit any additional questions, resolutions, requests for information and recommendations to the Procedural Officer by Monday, 7 March 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 11:34.



MS M WENGER, MPP
CHAIRPERSON: AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 9 May 2022