MPUMALANGA EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS – 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

SETTING THE SCENE

Penreach's ECD Program Manager, Modupi Mazibuko, facilitated the CoP. Modupi opened by welcoming participants and outlining the agenda. Participant organisations were invited to check-in by introducing themselves, their organisations and what they were looking forward to in the CoP.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS

UPDATE ON THE FUNCTION SHIFT

Dr Pat Moodley (Department of Education)

The ECD function shift will come into effect from 1 April 2022. The following is a roadmap on how this process being undertaken to get there.

The basic function shift education amendment.
The basic function shift education amendment is as follows:
Two years of compulsory ECD prior to Grade 1 will be implemented, with
    1. Grade R attendance by children turning 6 being
    Compulsory and
    2. Grade RR attendance by children turning five years of age
    being compulsory.

Key levers that will determine the trajectory of the Functional Shift:
- Integrated Nutritional Support – although the function is shifting from the department of Social Development to the Department of Education, the role of Department of Health remains critical to the provision of integrated nutritional support.
- Psycho Social Services
- Welfare Support Package
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice- incorporating the play-based needs of the child
- Professionalization of the Workforce – the creation of permanent posts with conditions of service
- Parental Capacitation

Although there is a national process taking place, the province, needs to ensure that these six levers are incorporated when the function shift comes into effect. To date, the DBE has identified sections from Chapter 5 of the Children's Act for transfer. The Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) further advised that the reference to Chapter 5 should be phrased in the same way as Chapter 6.

Progress Update on the Function Shift
The province is currently in the transitional stages of the function shift. The DSD is in the process of handing over documents to the DBE and providing capacitation with regards to registration and related issues. To this end, the following workstreams, consisting of the DSD and DoE have been established:

- Human Resource Management
- Labour Relations
- Finance and budgets
- Movable and immovable assets
- Communication
- Legislation, Policies, Contracts & Claims etc
- ECD Line Function
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Data Collection for the Function Shift

Data Collection for the Function Shift

An ECD Census will generate data that will inform the system of the number of children accessing ECD services and provide a snapshot of the number of registered, conditionally registered and unregistered centres. As of 21 September 2021, 303 ECD programmes have been surveyed in week 3 of ECD Census. There will be a total of 12 weeks of ECD Data fieldwork which will go on until December 2021

Points of consideration

- There is a need to develop an ECD Functional Shift Concept Document for the actualization/implementation of the shift of the 0-4 ECD Programme from DSD to DBE and to ensure that all the key levers are incorporated.
- There should be great focus on ECD Professionalization (posts and conditions of service), EPWP, Registration, Funding, Training, Infrastructure, play based resourcing, Advocacy etc.

Way forward

CoP participants are encouraged to participate in the process of the ECD Function Shift Concept Note. All inputs by the sector on the concept note will be collated, following which a special briefing will be called.

Inputs can be be emailed to Dr P Moodley at p.moodley@mpuedu.gov.za and Mr MJ Mnisi at m.mnisi@mpuedu.gov.za

A SELECTION OF COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION POINTS ON THE PRESENTATION

C: As the sector, we would like to appeal to the DoE to be patient with practitioners- particularly those in the process of gaining NQF Level 4 and 5 Qualifications. It will be important for the DoE to train ECD practitioners and assist in their upskilling.

Q: In terms of Professionalisation of the ECD sector-how can RTOs partner with the DoE in the Function Shift? RTOs have expertise, where can they fit in?

A: The DoE encourages and welcomes collaborations. Please give inputs in the concept note so we can collectively devise a way-forward.

Q: This was very insightful! It would be great to establish how the ECD sector together with Nal'ibali can stimulate home based reading through ongoing training. Also can organisations like Nal'ibali put forward a request for funding for training purposes?

Q: It has been reported that there are a number of schools who do not have facilities for grade R and Grade RR in provinces like the Free State, might this be the case in Mpumalanga as well? What is the intention for the schools and ECD centres while we deal with infrastructure challenges?

A: There is a close collaboration between ECDs and schools in some of the districts in terms of both infrastructure and curriculum. This is a model we can take forward in Mpumalanga.

To access Dr Moodley's Presentation, click *here.*

SUPDATES ON THE ECD EMPLOYMENT STIMULUS RELIEF FUND (ESRF)

Milton Yose (Data Innovators)

Milton's presentation gave updates of the ESRF package, addressed frequently asked questions (FAQs) and talked participants through the following: how to check the application status; how to correct staff verification failure; how to correct bank verification failure; who to contact and the role that the DSD and sector partners can play.

The Following is an outline of some of the FAQs

How to check your status

- In order to log-in the ECD stimulus at https://ecd.gov.za/ecd/login , you need to enter your Application ID/Application Reference Number,
- Press "**request pin**" button. The pin will be sent to your phone. After you have received the pin, please enter it,
- After you have logged in the portal, please see "**Summary**" section. It will show you the **outcome (i.e ECD application status)**.
  - ECD Status
  - Unverified staff
  - Payment
  - Verification failures
- Once you are done viewing the application status, you may **Log Out**.

Below are anecdotes of CoP Participant's experiences with the ESRF package system.

- "I got a call from somebody who claimed to be from the remote call centre department and since then I haven't been able to to gain access. This is despite having the correct reference number. I have tried to call them back but to no avail." – CoP Participant

- "I got an email on 15 May stating that my verification is successful, but there has been no progress since then. I was promised that DSD representatives would come visit the centre for site verification but I am unsure of how to proceed. The process is moving very slowly."

- "Most ECDS have similar challenges. When the DSD sends representatives for site verifications, we have no means of identifying the representatives and authenticating that they are indeed from the DSD. This puts ECDs at risk of fraud and exploitation. Security measures and protocols need to be put in place to ensure the safety of ECD practitioners, transparency and safety."

Comments by Milton Yose on the abovementioned experiences.

When it comes to site verifications, we accept responsibility for the confusion that ECDs have encountered. The communication about site verifications was not adequately filtered down to the ECD forums and centres. When the site verification teams were sent out with the view of expediating payments, the communication gaps became harder to miss. To remedy this, a memorandum was issued by the DSD and disseminated to districts through the South African ECD Forum. To further address the communication problems, a provincial desk has been created at provincial level.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Philisiwe Ndlovu

Q: What causes the bank verification to fail when the relevant letters from the bank have been attached?

A: The bank verification process has been very challenging. Initially applications were done through the central database system, which is more generic in it's function. Meaning, it is not designed specifically for the ESRF processes. This means that there is an added layer of complexity in validating to banking information. We have since suggested that the Vangasali database system be used to ensure that there this is a seamless integration of existing information

Q: Will you be appointing more people or organisations to help with site verifications?

A: Previous partners who have capacity to do site verifications, will continue leading that process. In provinces where partners have no capacity to do site verifications, the national department will appoint additional personnel.

Q: When are payments going to be administered?

A: There is a huge urgency to this. The DSD is busy with site verifications, upon completion, payments will go ahead. There is a huge drive towards the completion phase 1 in provincial departments because Phase two cannot be launched until the first phase is completed. We aim for the end of October, but cannot commit to a specific date. Furthermore, Milton acknowledged that the bank verification challenges were prominent and will be prioritised.

CHECK OUT

Partner organisations checked out by sharing brief reflections. Concluding the meeting, Modupi thanked participants, partners and the presenters

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