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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 910**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 17 MARCH 2023**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 10 - 2022**

**910. Ms A L A Abrahams (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

With regard to the temporary disability grant backlog which is an ongoing crisis due to the lack of SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) assessment doctors, (a) what is the current backlog status in each province, (b) what number of temporary disability grants have lapsed and (c) what is the current number of assessment doctors in each province, (d) how efficient has the online appointment booking system proven to be and (e) what other inventions has SASSA implemented to address the backlog? NW1016E

**REPLY:**

1.(a) The total assessment backlog picture inclusive of all the provinces, stands at 2 818 as of 18 March 2023.

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| **CLIENTS AWAITING ASSESSMENTS** |
| **Region** | **Awaiting** **Assessments** | **Awaiting ≥ 30 days (Backlogs)** |
| Eastern Cape | 2464 | 30 |
| Free State  | 2212 | 32 |
| Gauteng | 5084 | 238 |
| Kwa Zulu-Natal  | 6246 | 470 |
| Limpopo | 3608 | 67 |
| Mpumalanga | 2956 | 77 |
| Northern Cape | 2521 | 4 |
| North West  | 2040 | 207 |
| Western Cape  | 7297 | 1693 |
| **TOTAL**  | **34428** | **2818** |

**(b)** A total of 232 505 Temporary Disability Grants has lapsed between April 2022 and February 2023.

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| **Number of Temporary disability grants lapsed between April 2022 and February 2023**  |
| **Region** | **Number of TDGs per month of lapsing**  |
| **Apr 22** | **May 22** | **June 22** | **July 22** | **Aug 22** | **Sept22** | **Oct 22** | **Nov 22** | **Dec 22** | **Jan 23** | **Feb 23** | **Total** |
| EC |  | 1 237 | 1 261 | 1 010 | 506 | 418 | 1976 | 1713 | 1153 | 1351 | 1079 | **11 704** |
| FS  | 1 599 | 1 387 | 1 231 | 1 553 | 1 680 | 1600 | 1750 | 1160 | 1448 | 2082 | 2299 | **17 789** |
| GP | 3 372 | 2 348 | 1 946 | 2 656 | 3 118 | 2867 | 3254 | 2460 | 2853 | 4023 | 5254 | **34 151** |
| KZN  |  | 3 766 | 2 858 | 4 335 | 4 245 | 3880 | 4663 | 3499 | 4045 | 5209 | 5259 | **41 759** |
| LP | 767 | 1 467 | 1 692 | 1 975 | 2 007 | 1835 | 1863 | 1303 | 2348 | 3555 | 3950 | **22 762** |
| MP |  | 1 330 | 1 330 | 1 409 | 1 599 | 1260 | 1308 | 984 | 1154 | 1712 | 2206 | **14 292** |
| NC | 1 877 | 1 754 | 1 574 | 2 052 | 2 288 | 1969 | 2064 | 1819 | 1478 | 2369 | 2516 | **21 760** |
| NW | 1 330 | 1 159 | 1 159 | 1 270 | 1 278 | 1113 | 1138 | 952 | 1075 | 1383 | 1309 | **13 166** |
| WC | 6 481 | 5 328 | 3 879 | 4 755 | 4 635 | 4282 | 4974 | 4531 | 3713 | 5467 | 7083 | **55 128** |
| **Total**  | **15 426** | **19 776** | **16 924** | **21 015** | **21 356** | **19224** | **22990** | **18421** | **19267** | **27151** | **30955** | **232 505** |

**(c)** SASSA has contracted a total of 315 doctors across the country, however, it should be noted that for the Western Cape Region, assessments are largely conducted through Service Level Agreements held with the Districts Health Care System. In the WC Tertiary, Secondary and Districts Hospitals also undertake assessments to in-patients clients deemed to be meeting the eligibility criteria prior to their discharge. Regional Distribution of doctors as below:

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| **Number of Assessment Doctors Per Region** |
| **Region** | **No. of doctors**  |
| Eastern Cape  | 30 |
| Free State  | 32 |
| Gauteng  | 49 |
| KwaZulu-Natal  |  74 |
| Limpopo | 49 |
| Mpumalanga | 25 |
| Northern Cape  |  26 |
| North West  | 19 |
| Western Cape  | 11   |
| **TOTAL**  | **315** |

**(d )** A total of **3 502** appointments were made through the Online platform from April 2022 until February 2023 and the system has been highly efficient where clients elected to utilize it to make assessment bookings.

(e ) SASSA has an institutionalized backlog Strategy that is activated upon realization of risk of backlog build up, this may include:

* Booking System (EMAST) red-flagging clients that are booked in a backlog fashion at point of booking (Pro-active flagging of clients wherein the difference between the booking and scheduled assessment dates is more than 30 days defined as a backlog);
* Ferrying assessors from far flung areas into backlog prone areas to undertake assessments;
* Increasing assessment seating frequencies and number of assessors per seating;
* Increasing the number of assessments an assessor may conduct per assessment seating (This requires a prior approval from the GM for Grants Administration in Regions); and
* As a last resort the Agency has endorsed paper-based assessments in certain parts of the Western Cape in instances wherein there is sufficient/ adequate clinical information for such format of an assessment to take place (Prior Approval for this format of assessment is required from the GM for Grants Administration).
* Recruitment of additional doctors through the publication of Tender Bids, especially in the Western Cape Region. The region is currently exploring placing another Tender Bid subsequent to a poor response to the previous Bid;
* Engaging the Western Cape Public Health System/ clinicians on the eligibility criteria so as to empower them on conducting of social assistance assessments and lobbying them to undertake assessments on inpatients prior to discharge instead of referring clients to seek assessments bookings on their own subsequent to discharge (Clinician initiated Assessments in clients with a high likelihood of qualification and the Tag Strategy is “Why Refer When you can Assess”.