

COVID-19

9 April 2020

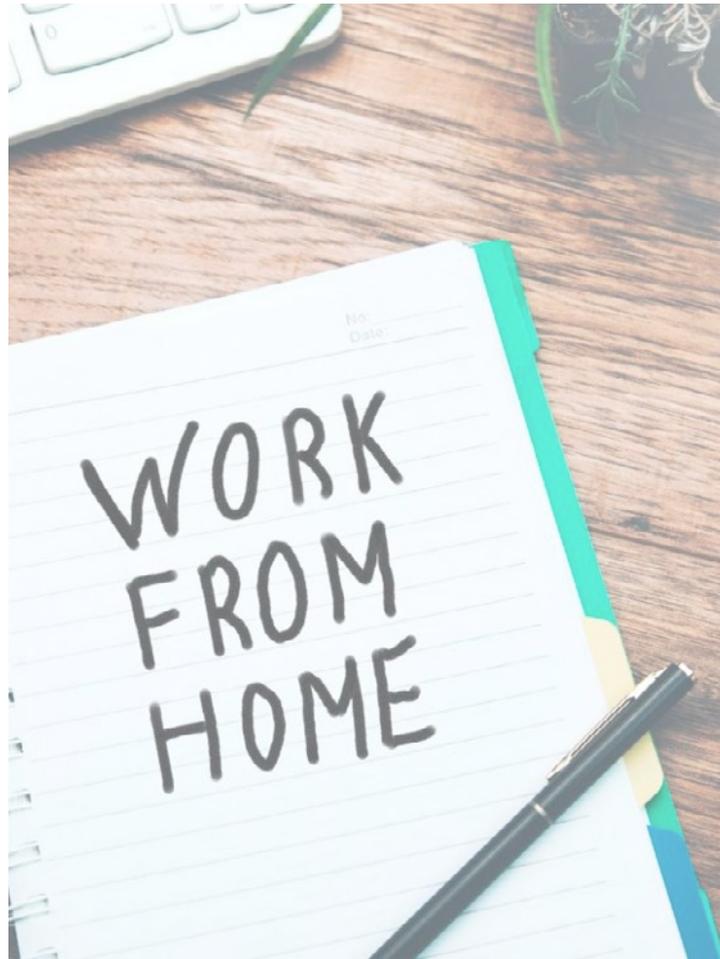
Stats SA COVID-19 Lockdown Communique

Our work and mandate continues

From the SG's desk

At this point in the history of our country and humanity as a whole, we are called upon to reflect deeply on our behaviour as a species. For aeons, the conduct of human beings has been an enemy to the planet, as science has proven with the heating of the earth, commonly referred to as climate change. Apart from the Spanish Flu that took almost 500 000 South Africans in the space of six weeks in 1918, never before have we witnessed a global human catastrophe of the scale of COVID-19.

I am writing to all of our staff, who have been on National Lockdown against COVID-19, aware that you are heeding the call to #STAYATHOME as per the order of the President so that we can observe the virology of COVID-19. Unlike our forebears who, in the aftermath of the armistice of 1918, failed to control the Spanish Flu that took 6% of South Africans at the time, I can say without fear of contradiction that we shall overcome. I also want to stress the injunction of #STAYATHOME so that we can defeat the virus and return the country and Stats SA to something resembling normality. I am happy to see that many in our country are observing the lockdown, with a few exceptions here and there.



Day



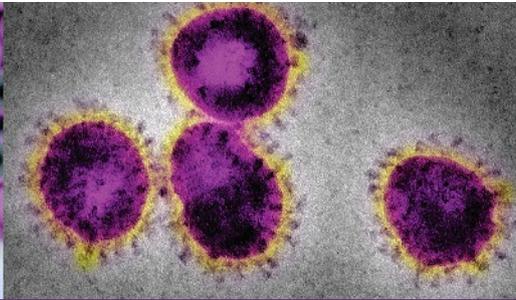
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From the SG's desk

The leadership of the organisation is deeply immersed in this current situation and we, like others in our country, are confident that South Africa will beat COVID-19 so that we can all get back to business. Central to our work is the continued production of credible and world-acclaimed statistics in line with our covenant of independence and the UN fundamental principles of official statistics, within the limitations of the current situation. Our staff and senior management service (SMS) and others who can work from home are ensuring that our organisation is not paralysed. We are reaping the fruits of our investment in technology as most meetings and consultations are able to happen online with the harnessing of technology, and I must pay tribute to our colleagues in the IT and corporate services directorates, amongst others, for the resilience and dedication they are displaying to ensure that we remain open for business.

The virus has struck the centre of world capitals such as the United States, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom with devastating effect. Our country is continuing to show leadership as our infections are at this point still below the 2 000 mark, while international infections are fast approaching



the 2 million mark in 184 countries. I do not have a crystal ball, but I am hopeful that we will rally as a country, as we often do in times of crisis; that we will stay at home and, consequently, disrupt the infection rate and show how this disease can be defeated. Our country and her people have never capitulated to any enemy, as evidenced by our victory against polio. I wish all of you good health at this time.

This week also marks the observance of two major religious festivals – the Jewish Passover and Easter. While COVID-19 means that we cannot be together physically, let us come together as a community in spirit, and observe these in our own homes, so we find unity even in these times of separation.

We shall not surrender! We shall continue to stay at home!



Happy Easter

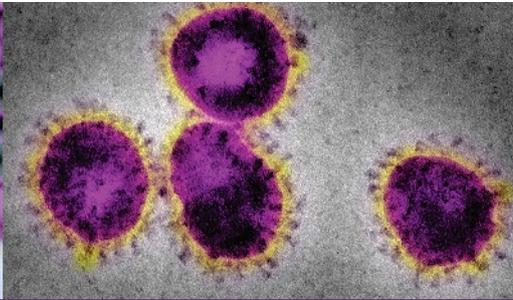
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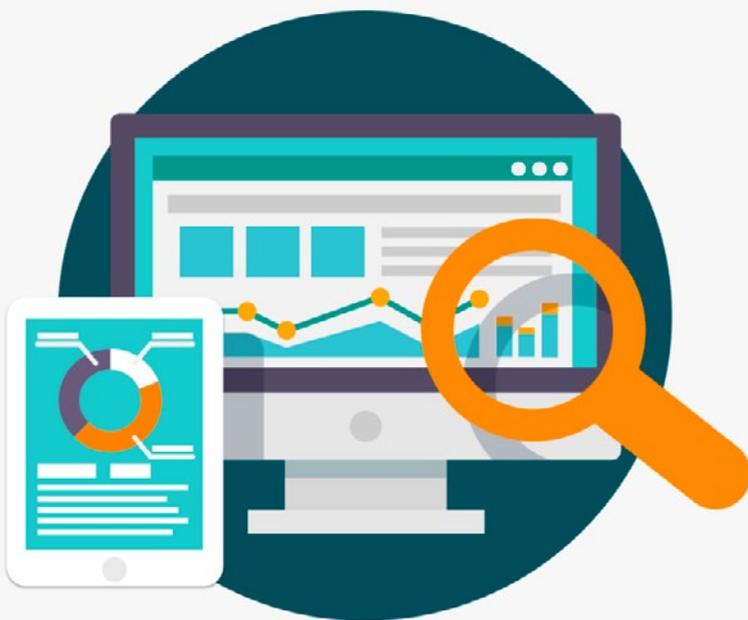


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Our work and mandate continues

The Deputy Director-Generals (DDGs) continue to oversee the work being done by those who are working from home.



Week 2:

*Working from
home*

Economic Statistics

The management and other staff of the economic statistics branch continued to work on various projects. Some of these include:

- Started with the collection of weekly price statistics on selected food and pharmaceutical items for the month of April in order to track changes during the period of COVID-19 lockdown;
- Developing a new online survey that will be sent to the current AFS sample, to gauge the economic impact of COVID-19 in a qualitative manner;
- Developing different scenarios on how the branch will respond to a complete, partial or extended lockdown of the country; and
- Continued with the activities reported last week.

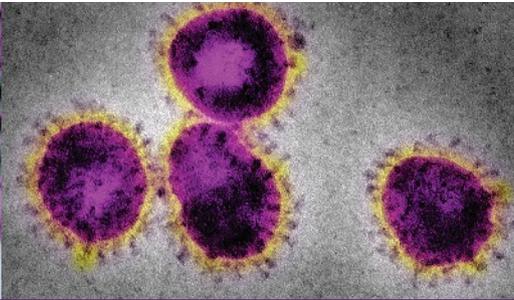
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Methodology, Standards and Research

■ Policy, Research and Analysis is scanning for possible research topics. For this week, the main task was reviewing a draft paper with the South African Space Agency and Earth Observations.

■ **Survey Standards**

- Prepared physical variable name for Labour variables according to variable naming standard in preparation for working group meetings.
- Prepared response categories for Labour variables according to standards and guidelines in preparation for working group meetings.
- Prepared Census 2021 remaining concepts and definitions (Social conditions/personal services, geography, construction, income, pension, spending and wealth and tourism) in preparation for working group meetings.

■ **Business Register**

- Continued with the Profiling schedule for 2020/21.
- In relation to the Recoding of the SBR Project, competency test and Memo for recruitment of contract staff were drafted .
- Preliminary work has been done around thinking about the 18-month VAT edit rule due to the impact of COVID-19.

■ **Methodology and Evaluation**

- Methodological support to survey areas including support to Econ Stats annual and short term surveys, Business Register on frames and audit report, Population and Social Stats including panel data weighting for the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS).
- Working on verifying the Code of Practice self-assessment tool for surveys which is a QMS output.
- Working on experimental tool for Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) matching.
- Working on state-of-preparedness response in terms of attending to econ stats and population and social stats under scenarios of: a) Lockdown is lifted; b) Lockdown is extended; and c) Lockdown is lifted but reinstated soon afterwards.

■ **Administration Activities in the Branch**

- Performance management plans are being discussed within work areas.
- Reviews of Quarter 4 performance within Business Register.
- Operational planning documents were reviewed
- Drafted the 2020/21 training schedule for Business Register.
- SMS have started attending to eDisclosures.



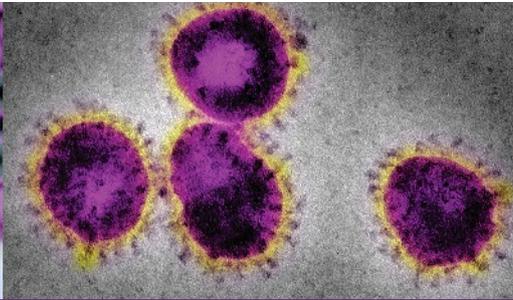
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Population and Social Statistics

■ Ongoing research around COVID-19 trends, modelling, responses from other NSOs across the world and feeding this into possible projects and initiatives for Stats SA to pursue in the quest to measure the impact of COVID-19 on the population and economy, as well as to advise stakeholders.

■ Further research done on what other National Statistics Offices (NSOs) are preparing to do in mitigation of the lockdown and beyond and what additional or new products are being produced. The information has been used as a basis to develop a document on work plans for various scenarios beyond lockdown for all household surveys and other Chief Directorates in the Branch.

■ Research on alternative ways of collecting labour market information in the phase of COVID-19 as well as the impact on the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) estimates is ongoing. Editing and imputation and analysis as well as report writing of various surveys (Survey of Activities of Young People (SAYP), Mpumalanga Employment and Business Survey (MEBS) and Labour Market Dynamics 2020) is in progress.

■ Monitoring printing of the QLFS Quarter 2 questionnaire is ongoing. Published Volunteer



Activities, 2018; Labour Market Dynamics, 2019; and Quarterly Employment Statistics, Q4 2019.

■ Continuously attending to various user requests. Work on mapping the revised 2018 Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) codes to the existing data points for 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2015 is ongoing. Continue with work on National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) 2020 data finalisation and review the structural edits, as well as finalisation of the General Household Survey (GHS) demographic editing and imputations.

■ Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) implementation activities are ongoing, the team is busy finalising the development of seven outstanding CAPI manuals. Regular online attendance of COVID-19 Crisis Committee, Chief Directorates, Census 2021, Branch and EXCO meetings by Branch senior management.

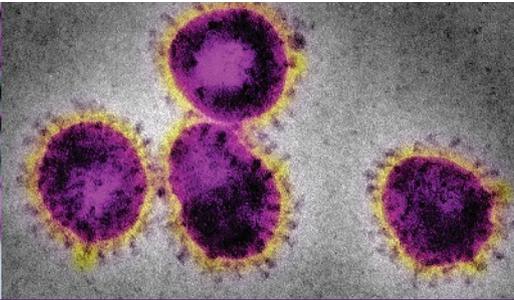
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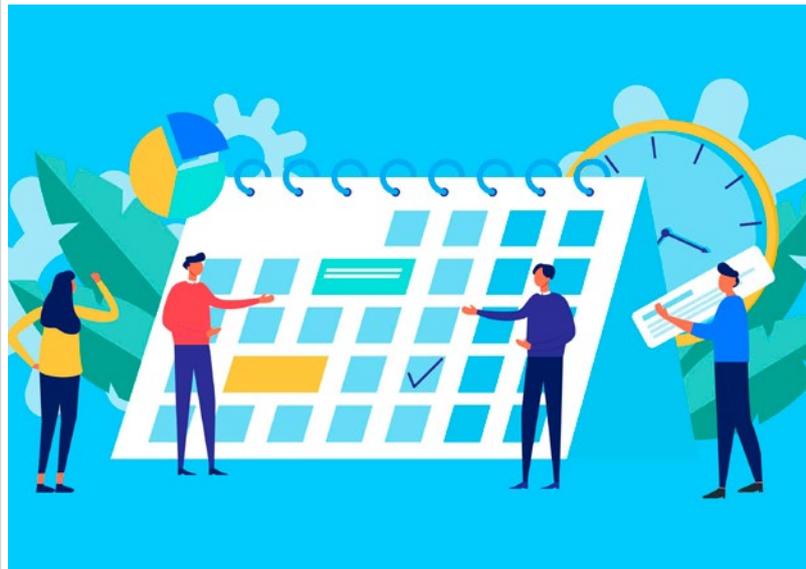
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Our work and mandate continues

Programme Office

■ The financial year came to an end on 31 March 2020. Directors are currently capturing actual performance as at 31 March 2020 on the monthly milestone reporting module of Radikopantsha via the VPN. Reminders were sent to all Stats SA Directors. Programme Office is busy contacting relevant Directors to submit their information and verifying the information.

■ All approved operational plans for 2020/2021 were due on 31 March 2020. Programme Office conducted several operational planning sessions with Chief Directorates. Most of the Directorate and Chief Directorate Operational Plans for 2020/2021 were verified and quality assured. Currently Programme Office is busy verifying and communicating with the few Chief Directorates where operational plans are still not complete or outputs reflected in the Work Programme are not yet captured in the operational plans.



■ Programme Office is ensuring the availability of Radikopantsha and assisting stakeholders that are experiencing any access problems. Relevant available financial and Human Resource data are up loaded daily on Radikopantsha.

■ Programme Office is continuing to provide support to EXCO and the COVID-19 team.



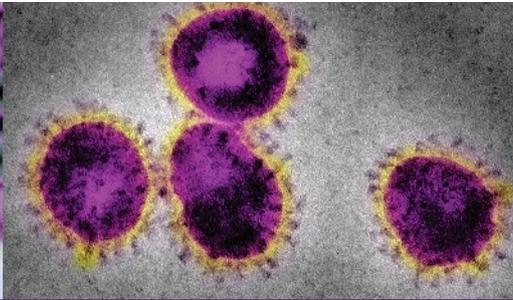
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South African National Statistical System (SANSS)

- A research team was formed to conduct research on the impact of COVID-19 on the statistical operations of the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the broader national statistics systems across the world. A draft SANSS report on COVID-19 was compiled.
- The teams from the Social and Economic Stats Subsystems were engaged in research work for indicators to be included for Phase 3 of the Integrated Indicator Framework (IIF).
- The Independent Assessment Unit is continuing with research on SASQAF review as well as research on data quality dimensions for administrative data.
- The Coordination Component incorporated comments from legal on SARB MoU and sent it to the Bank for their final review.
- On legislative reform, the responsible team is responding to the comments that were received from the DPME on the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment process.
- The Data and Information Management team is reviewing the new features that they will propose to SASQAF Online Assessment for the new financial year. They also initiated contact with experts on SDMX in the installation of free software to set up SDMX ICT infrastructure for the SANSS.



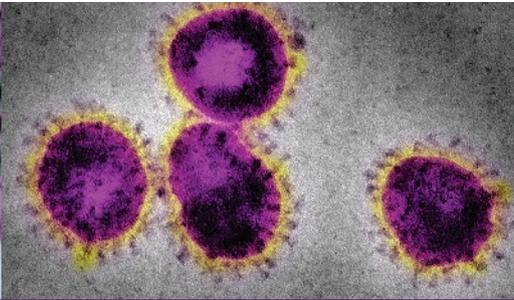
- We gave inputs to a Questionnaire for Evaluating Statistical Capacity for SADC Countries.

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Statistical Collection and Outreach

Provinces

■ Despite the core work of provinces - data collection - being suspended during the lockdown, provinces have been working on the following:

- financial year closing activities
- financial and quarterly reporting
- monthly milestone reports
- strategic reporting
- performance reviews and plans
- spatial layer update
- demarcation of EAs
- information requests
- Some provinces serve on the Provincial Disaster Management Committees that meet daily

■ Provincial heads were tasked with costing and exploring different scenarios for data collection. We have been working closely with Household Survey Operations (HSO) on this. The scenarios included lockdown is lifted and we can work, lockdown lifted but we are refused entry, lockdown lifted but COVID-19 on the rise, and lockdown extended beyond April. Most statistical agencies globally have suspended data collection due to fears for safety of staff and respondents, and have deployed innovative solutions



to ensure business continuity. Staff wellbeing remains the priority of provinces and it is with relief that we can report that so far no staff have been infected with COVID-19. We are all aware how we have been affected and will continue to strive to find ways to mitigate this impact so that the mighty organisation that is Stats SA does not falter. It is clear that nothing will be the same when we return. There are a number of methodological and technological implications that Stats SA has to consider. COVID-19 is the biggest disruptor that we have ever experienced and, as bad as it is, it also comes with an opportunity to do things differently.

■ Planning and arrangements for a safe return to office on 17 April 2020 are underway, including the sanitatising of offices and vehicles.

International Relations

- Coordinating inputs from content areas for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) questionnaires and country inputs for validation of SADC Protocol.
- Strategic reporting is continuing.

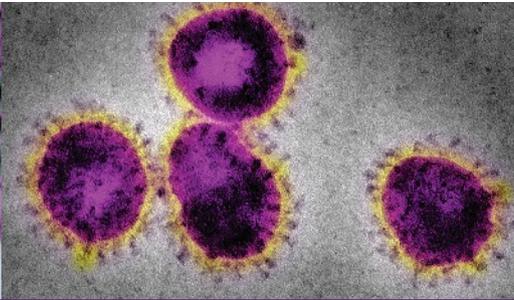
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Communication, Marketing and Publishing

The **Publishing team** continued to work on the following:

- Mbalo brief articles,
- Census 2021 translations,
- Census of Commercial Agriculture (CoCA) and Mbalo brief designs,
- Provincial signage

Electronic Product Development

- Continuing to monitor online products to ensure access at all times.
- Providing support to SuperCROSS users and online tool users.
- Supporting external users regarding their information needs. In general, requests receive are related to COVID-19.



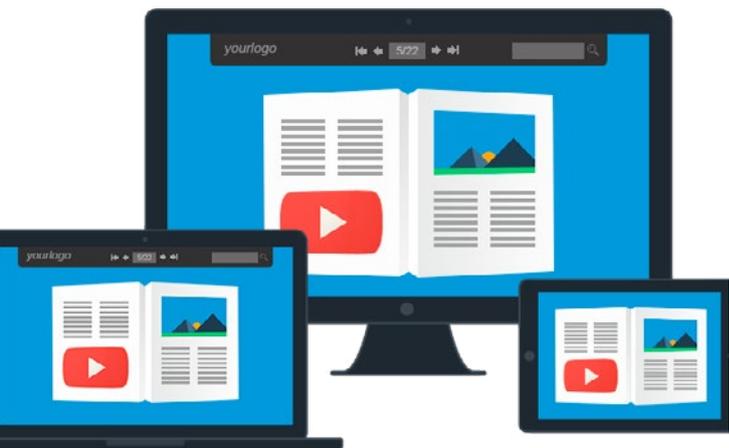
User Information Services (UIS)

UIS received 65 requests this week.

- 24 hours: 15
- 5 Days Special request: 8
- 5 Days Area Request: 25
- Other: 8
- Questionnaires: 3
- Covid: 6

Corporate Communication

Corporate Communication activities are continuing as usual.



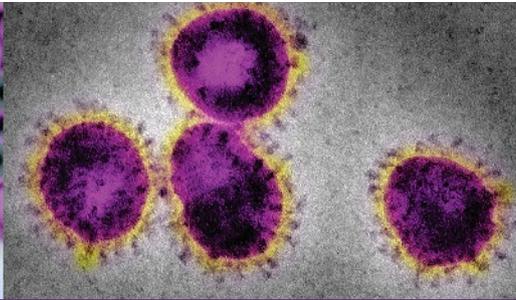
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Corporate Services

■ The Acting Deputy Director-General (DDG): Corporate Services chairs the COVID-19 Crisis Steering Committee comprising of the Business Continuity Management Team, DDGs and Organised Labour. Meetings are held bi-weekly to assess the COVID-19 Crisis and to prepare for all possible scenarios of returning to work post the lockdown period. Feedback is provided to EXCO on a weekly basis. The efforts to mitigate and contain the spread of the virus post-lockdown is critical and Corporate Services plays a key role in this process. The procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), scanners and other purchases during this lockdown period therefore continues to ensure that all activities will commence seamlessly when we all return to work.

■ The Chief Directorates within Corporate Services continue to operate in ensuring that our statutory obligations in respect of the year end financial reporting are still met, service provider payments are timeously processed, the human resource environment in respect of all standard monthly including payroll activities are executed, support to our customers, such as EAP processes and all other activities remain a priority as our government has also not shutdown. The security of our essential staff who have to work and come to the office is a priority. Facilities management is therefore also fully operational.



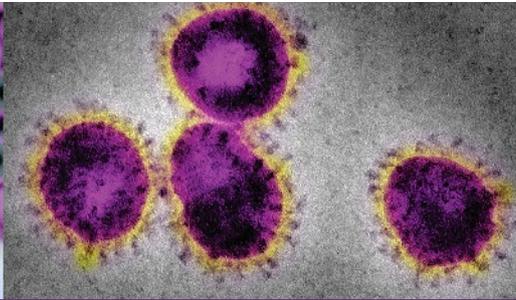
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SMS Financial Disclosures 2019/2020



The SMS edisclosure system for the 2019/2020 financial reporting period opened on 1 April 2020 and is accessible by **typing the following** into your Internet browser: www.edisclosure.gov.za. This is possible **from any internet connection and can also be done via your smart phone**. Please do not click on any link or go through any website, as it will not work.

Financial Interests to be disclosed includes **all assets registered under your name**, vehicles, properties, trusts, income bearing assets, shares and other financial interests. Personal loan accounts must also be disclosed.

The Stats SA deadline for submission is Monday, 20 April 2020 to ensure that we achieve 100% compliance again this year. This will enable the Ethics Officer to review submissions received and timeously resolve any queries. Unfortunately, no extensions will be granted.

If you have forgotten your login details, the forgotten password option on the login page is functional. Kindly go through the tutorial (“need forgotten password help”) on the login page. However, if you lock your account, this tool will not assist you in any way as you then need to do a password reset request.

If you require any other assistance or information, please contact Ms. Charmaine Marshall or Dorah Madiba via email.

A sincere thank you to those SMS members who have already submitted their disclosures.

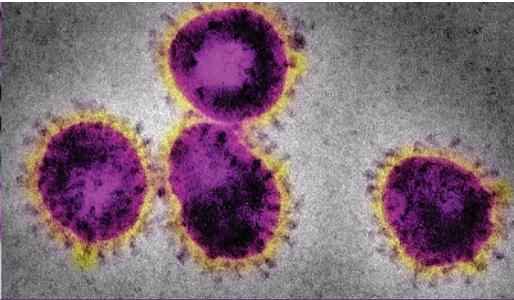
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COUNSELLING SERVICES & VIRTUAL OUTREACH

SUPPORT FOR:





THE WORKING FROM HOME WORKFORCE

- The toll-free line remains available 24-7-365
- Scheduled telephonic & virtual consultations can be arranged at a time convenient for the employee



THOSE AT WORK FEELING STRESSED

- We recommend that every organisation reminds employees of the wellness programme, its continued availability and the contact details via their communication platforms
- We will assess each individual for overall mental wellbeing, and work with employees during times of uncertainty
- We will ensure that mental health risk assessments are done as per standards in employee wellness programmes



THE RETURN TO WORK EMPLOYEES

- With consent, we can contact the employee returning to work to ensure that workplace readiness and mental health issues and concerns are addressed
- We can also guide managers and supervisors on the approach to take when embarking on return to work

THOSE IN QUARANTINE / SELF-ISOLATION



- With consent, we can reach out to any employee that is seeking counselling and support
- We can do emotional check-ins with the employee at intervals that are agreed to via the telephonic and virtual services
- We offer counselling and support in dealing with the changes and working through any areas of impact to ensure that we continue to care for the mental wellbeing of the employees

LINE MANAGERS



- The line managers and management groups are encouraged to contact the EWP to discuss any area of employee health and wellbeing that may be of concern
- While the EWP cannot offer labour law opinions and guidance, we can focus on productivity and performance related goals and concerns

ONSITE GROUP TRAUMA DEBRIEFINGS REQUESTS



- The group trauma debriefings are offered onsite (depending on the environmental risk assessment provided)
- We will at all times make efforts to ensure the safety of our affiliates
- We can enable group sessions via the virtual and teleconferencing platforms





For confidential advice and support on various wellness matters, call us on 0800 004 770 or SMS 31581 and we will call you back or e-mail: ewp@lifehealthcare.co.za

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