

SAPS launches dedicated quarantine site-4 September 2020

The South African Police Service (SAPS) has unveiled a 45-bed quarantine and isolation COVID-19 site for infected members.

Beyond the pandemic, the facility will be converted into a 160-bed South African Police Service (SAPS) hospital.

Located at the SAPS Tshwane Academy, the project is a collaborated effort between the SAPS and POLMED [SAPS Medical Scheme], working closely with the Department of Health in preparing the facility. The police will also have a site at the Bishop Lavis Training Academy in the Western Cape.

Speaking at the launch, National Police Commissioner, General Khehla Sitole, said the police hospital is part and parcel of a long-term plan and part of a long-term vision.

“We intended to have a police hospital by 2021. This also coincides with a police university and detective university, which we intend to have soon. Also complementing our human capital investment, the SAPS is [in the process of] establishing police estates to provide more safety to our members, as we move forward,” he said.

The National Commissioner said while the world grapples with Coronavirus, SAPS members are not immune to contracting the virus as they execute their obligation of ensuring that criminals are brought to justice.

“On a daily basis, our members are getting infected. At the present moment, we have an infection rate of 15 707,” said the General.

Although SAPS has recorded over 11 000 recoveries, he said, this facility will assist in increasing the recovery rate. The virus has already claimed the lives 193 SAPS members.

To respond to COVID-19, the SAPS established a committee in an effort to also ensure that the necessary support is availed for officers on the ground.

“We decided that while we are on a long-term plan to have a police hospital, we have to align our response with COVID-19 by turning this hospital into a quarantine site with POLMED.

“From then on, a strategy will be put in place to have facilities across all provinces so that we invest in the health of the organisation, making sure that members are taken care of,” Sitole said.

Police Deputy Minister Cassel Mathale said while policing was a psychologically stressful occupation characterised by danger, high demand, human misery and exposure to trauma as well as death, these had been compounded by Coronavirus.

“It has exposed us to further health woes. We have lost a lot of dedicated officers, while many others have been infected. We have had to respond innovatively to curb the rapid spread of this pandemic and protect our frontline workers for them to continue delivering a much-needed service to citizens,” he said.

He said the opening of the facility was a step in the right direction.

“This partnership between POLMED and SAPS is commendable. On behalf of government, I want to encourage that this partnership be strengthened to ensure that members have access to quality healthcare when they need it.”

The virus, Mathale said, had presented government with lessons that forced the State to prioritise the health of its people.

“We are all aware of the investment that our government has made during this time to strengthen our healthcare system. It runs into billions and billions of rands and we must do everything to ensure that our people continue to benefit beyond COVID-19,” he said.

He emphasised that SAPS needs to make the facility a success.

“Let’s build an alternative model that may be just the right model for the NHI [National Health Insurance] to borrow from. My wish is to see a strong administration and management of this facility so it becomes a benchmark of excellence in healthcare. My wish is to see what POLMED and SAPS have started being rolled out in all nine provinces. You have our support as the Ministry of Police.”

Mathale said the health and safety of SAPS members is a priority of Police Minister Bheki Cele, who initially made the call for the establishment of such a facility.

“This is the beginning in this regard,” he said.