

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE REGULATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE SPECIAL COVID-19 SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS GRANT

Pretoria, 14 July 2022: The Minister of Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu, has published draft regulations to amend some of the provisions for the Special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant for the period, 1 March 2022 to 31 March 2023.

These amendments are proposed considering the undertaking by the Department of Social Development to review the provisions should the uptake of the grant and other challenges make it necessary. The Department is now able to report that implementation of the new iteration has commenced, and as of 30 June this year, the numbers are as follows:

- A total of 11,4 million people applied, of whom 43% are male and 57% female.
- Caregivers of child support grant beneficiaries account for 4 million of the applicants.
- the total number of non-citizens who applied is 21 207, and the majority are special permit holders from Lesotho at 15 882, followed by asylum seekers at 2133, and special permit holders from Zimbabwe and Angola at 1613 and 1579 respectively.
- Youth under the age of 35 years account for 60% of the applications, while 40% of the applicants have a grade 12 qualification and 5% a tertiary education.
- So far, SASSA has started paying the June applicants while also back paying the successful reconsiderations from August 2021 onwards.
- For June 2022 applications, 5.273 million beneficiaries were approved, of whom 3.729 have been paid.

Under the third iteration, we introduced the testing of income against the bank account for all applicants, and not only those who had been declined. It should be noted that the maximum allowable income was set at R350, which meant that every applicant who was found to have received an income exceeding R350 in their bank account would be excluded.

Following the implementation of the new regulations, including the checking of applicants' bank accounts against the income threshold of R350, the Department is concerned at the low numbers of approvals. Out of 11.4 million applicants for the month of June, only 5.2 million beneficiaries were approved. This represents less than 50% of the applications.

In line with the undertaking that the Department would review the threshold should the numbers indicate this, the Minister has now published draft regulations to amend some of the qualification criteria for public comments. The key proposed amendments relate to the maximum allowable income, the application of the bank verification and the requirement for applicants to confirm their need for the grant after every three months.

In this regard, the Department is proposing to increase the maximum allowable income from R350 to the food poverty line of R624, meaning that SASSA will decline any applicant who receives more than R624 into their bank account for each relevant month. It is important to state that the assessment will be conducted monthly, and should the income received into the account in a particular month fall below the R624, such an applicant will then qualify for the grant.

The value of the grant itself remains R350 per person per month for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and the second amendment seeks to remove the requirement for applicants to indicate if they require the grant after every three months.

Since the applications are in any case assessed every month, the Department is proposing to do away with this requirement.

In addition, the third amendment is aimed at removing the clause that places the bank verification process as the main criteria for determining eligibility for the grant.

This is to ensure that SASSA applies all the different database checks, including the bank account income checks before making the decision to approve or decline the application.

The Department also wishes to remind applicants that, as in the previous dispensation, they must submit an appeal in each month for which they have been declined. However, the appeal is now lodged directly with the Appeals Tribunal and no longer with SASSA.

The new website for appeals is <https://srd.dsd.gov.za>

In conclusion, the Department wishes to reiterate the request for all stakeholders to take this opportunity and submit comments on the draft regulations, to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals can benefit from the SRD grant.

The Department also extends sincere apologies for the long delay in assessing the April and May applications and we are doing everything in our power to fast track the assessments, especially, the bank verification processes that are currently required by the regulations.

During the month of July, we will be finalising the outstanding payments for those who were approved for June, and also complete the approvals and payments for the April applications.

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT