



SASSA PRESS RELEASE

09 May 2020

SASSA State of Readiness for COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant Applications

Systems for the special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant announced by President Ramaphosa recently have passed the final stage of development. The social development portfolio comprising the Department of Social Development (DSD), the National Development Agency (NDA) and SASSA is pleased to announce its readiness for implementation. Minister Zulu will launch the opening of the application process on Monday, 11 May 2020.

The criteria for application is set to be gazetted later today in order to enable implementation and allow the millions of deserving members of the public to access the grant. Minister Zulu will present a comprehensive report on the matter to the National Co-ordinating Council tomorrow, Sunday 10 May 2020. The WhatsApp and related electronic application options will go live on Monday and this will be demonstrated during a media launch to be addressed by Minister Zulu.

SASSA has been rightfully inundated with enquiries from the public about the process of application and the public must be thanked for its patience during these difficult times. SASSA had to ensure that it puts all the required controls in place to ensure that the grant is only accessed by deserving and qualifying individuals. There was also a need to ensure that these issues are contained in a legal document in the form of a Government Gazette. In the process of developing the required technology, a new number has been secured for applications and the Minister will detail how it will work.

A WhatsApp platform of the Health department was used in the initial test and 15 000 applications were loaded onto the system. All qualifying applications received during the test phase will be processed by 15 May 2020. Applicants without smart phones will also be able to access this new platform through a Short Message Service (SMS) using the Unstructured Supplementary Data Service (USSD). Volunteers and community development workers will be deployed to assist those who have no access to technology with applications. Manual applications will not be done at SASSA offices at all and there will be no need to fill in paper application forms.

The platform that will be used is going to be an electronic one due to the need to comply with the State of Disaster requirements of social distancing among others. Another consideration was the speed at which online applications can be taken and processed as opposed to using a manual system. The huge need out there demands that government acts with speed in order to address immediate challenges facing the country and its people.

Applicants are cautioned not to provide their banking details to anyone to avoid scams. SASSA will only request information once the application has been approved. All beneficiaries and applicants should never give their PIN number or the CVV number on the back of the banking card to anyone –not even SASSA. Once applications are approved, SASSA will request confirmation of bank accounts through a secure site – this will also be done electronically. Applicants have the right to request confirmation that a request is from SASSA in order to protect themselves. Payment will be effected through deposits made directly into an approved applicant’s bank account if they have one. Applicants without bank accounts can also apply and their payment will be effected through a money transfer.

SASSA reserves the right to validate the information provided by applicants with other public and private databases to prevent misrepresentation and potential fraud. Applicants will be required to agree with this condition for their applications to be processed.

The launch date coincides with the reopening of SASSA local offices on Monday. Only a third of employees will return to work and therefore SASSA services on offer will be limited. The numbers of clients served at local offices will be very limited, to ensure social distancing and general compliance with the law..

In order to do this, SASSA local offices will be attending to specific grants on specific days only:

Monday and Tuesday	Grants for older persons (old age grants)
Wednesday and Thursday	Child support grants and foster child grants

Friday

Administration for staff to attend to matters that flow over from the previous days

Under lockdown level 4 no disability grants, care dependency grants or grant in aid applications will be done, as the access to health facilities is restricted to emergency cases and COVID 19 cases only. This means that no medical assessments, which is a legislated requirement prior to an application for these grant types, can be undertaken.

Minister Zulu will also clarify how SASSA is going to deal with lapsed temporary disability grants. Lapsed care dependency grants will also be clarified in line with the Government Gazette which the Minister will simplify for the public.

Media enquiries: Paseka Letsatsi 082 883 9969