



GAUTENG PROVINCE
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO: All Media

ATT: News Editors, Health Reporters

For immediate release

Thursday, 13th August 2020

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONCERNED BY THE NUMBER OF ABANDONED BABIES

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) is concerned by the number of babies abandoned after birth in public hospitals.

This year alone, 118 babies have been abandoned in various public hospitals. Some of the reasons cited for abandoning babies includes teenage mothers being fearful of their parents, unwanted and unplanned pregnancies, lack of immediate basic supplies of clothes and toiletries for the mother and new born upon discharge, lack of emotional, financial and social support from the father, and undocumented migrant mothers.

The time spent in hospital by abandoned babies ranges from a week to a month or longer, this depending on the medical condition of the baby, and the time frames for the Hospital Social Workers to facilitate pre-statutory processes for the transfer of the baby to an accredited child protection organization, in terms of the Children's Act. No. 38 of 2005.

To reduce the number of abandoned babies, hospital social workers conduct educational awareness programmes with expectant mothers on care options such as adoption, temporal care and foster care.

Through networking with child protection organisations, hospital social workers are able to provide mothers at risk for abandonment, with basic material support for both mother and child.

This provides the mother with some immediate means to care for herself and the baby until she can make an informed decision. In instances where the mothers agree to

care for the child, upon discharge, she is referred to a child protection organisation for further support and care options.

Furthermore, there is improved identification of expectant and new mothers at 'risk for abandonment'; they are referred by nurses to hospital social workers for psycho-education, counselling and other care options.

Hospitals with high rate of child abandonment so far are Carletonville (19), Leratong (19), Far East Rand (13), Tembisa (10) and Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (10).

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Issued by the Department of Health

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