

## IMPROVEMENT OF THE CLASSIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SEVERE MALNUTRITION

The Gauteng MEC for Health, Ms Qedani Mahlangu has revealed that there is high fatality rate as a result of severe malnutrition and she said improvement plan was being prioritised to address this. She announced this while presenting the Department's Annual Report for the period 2015/2016 to the Health Portfolio Committee and members of the public in Orange Farm on Friday, 28 October 2016.

For the period under review, about 3 040 new cases of severe acute malnutrition were identified, and out of those about 1512 children were admitted at different facilities and unfortunately about 113 deaths were experienced as a result of severe acute malnutrition.

It is imperative noting that, once malnutrition is at acute stage there is high mortality, it is extremely important to detect it at earlier stages. This vulnerable children are identified at our Primary Health Centres with suspected malnutrition (moderate or severe malnutrition) referred to hospital/s for final diagnosis through the World Health Organisation (WHO) classification protocol, and put on appropriate treatment/management thereof.

MEC Ms Qedani Mahlangu said: "In our effort to fight the scourge of malnutrition, we will make sure that children do not reach hospitals very late with an advanced disease condition which could lead to fatality. Our Antenatal Care will continue to identify women at risk of malnutrition due to low income (vulnerability) and provide them with food supplementations, the Department of Social Development will continue provide food parcels".

Exclusive breastfeeding is aggressively promoted, supported and protected for 6 months and as such mothers are encouraged to breastfeed. To mitigate on incorrect classification of malnutrition, the Department will continue to train doctors and nurses in all healthcare facilities on the correct classification of severe acute malnutrition for early diagnosis and immediate access to appropriate treatment.

Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD) (crèches) in Gauteng with children from low income households are also trained, through the Community Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (CIMCI), on how to identify children vulnerable to malnutrition. Standard menus are provided by the Department of Health to all crèches/ECD.

We, are finalising our plans to implement the Community-Based Growth Promotion and Monitoring (Community-Based Nutrition Programme) and roll-out to all crèches/ECD Practitioners training on Vitamin A and Deworming Programme.