



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ON AIDS(PCA)

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VENUE : DURBAN

DBE POLICY ON THE PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT OF LEANER PREGNANCY IN SCHOOL, 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Background

- The DBE Policy has been developed to address the conundrum of learner pregnancy in South African schools
- DBE recognises the massive problem of learner pregnancy in RSA:
 - It forces many girls to drop out of school; traps many in the cycle of poverty dependant on public health assistance, and leaves many stigmatised by society for being teenage mothers or forced into early marriage
 - It creates a greater risk in terms of maternal complications resulting in low survival rates of babies and forces many girls to prematurely take on an adult role with devastating emotional, social and health consequences
- It affects the lives of thousands of young people(mostly girls), often limiting their personal growth, their pursuit of rewarding careers and their ambitions, with incalculable impact on South Africa's socio-economic landscape

Teenage pregnancy facts

LEARNER PREGNANCY IN KZN SCHOOLS BETWEEN APRIL 2020-MARCH 2021

DISTRICT	GRADES (4-7) AGES (10-14)	GRADES (8-12) AGES (15-19+)	TOTAL
AMAJUBA	1	41	42
HARRY GWALA	0	6	6
ILEMBE	1	151	152
KING CETSHWAYO	1	47	48
PINETOWN	1	70	71
UGU	3	100	103
UMGUNGUNDLOVU	2	85	87
UMKHANYAKUDE	1	93	94
UMLAZI	5	61	66
UMZINYATHI	3	22	25
UTHUKELA	0	30	30
ZULULAND	1	75	76
TOTAL	19	781	800

Policy Goals

- To **reduce** the incidence of learner pregnancy through the provision of quality **Comprehensive Sexuality Education(CSE)** and access to adolescent and youth-friendly **Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services**.
- To promote the **Constitutional right** of learners to basic education by ensuring they are **not excluded from school** as a result of pregnancy and childbirth.
- To provide a **supportive environment** for them to continue and **complete** their basic education.

Scope of Application

The policy applies to the following:

- Learners;
 - Educators;
 - Principals;
 - School management teams;
 - School governing bodies;
 - School Based Support Teams;
 - DBE Staff and
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- Other co-curricular service providers and NGOs that are directly involved in the prevention and management of learner pregnancies in the basic education system at all public and independent schools in the Republic of South Africa.

Guiding Principles

This Policy's principles are informed by the Constitution, national legislation and regional and international conventions and serve as absolute points of reference in terms of its interpretation and application. The principles are:

- Access to Education
- Gender Equality
- Access to Comprehensive Pregnancy Prevention
- Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
- Counselling, Care and Support
- Protection from Stigma and Discrimination
- Dignity, Privacy and Confidentiality
- Reasonable Accommodation
- Critical Partnerships

Policy Provisions (1)

1. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Objective: To ensure that schools are safe, free of stigma and provide a non-discriminatory environment for pregnant learners, guaranteeing them the right to education during their pregnancy and, following childbirth, facilitating their re-entry into schools.

- Officials, principals, SMTs, SGBs, SBSTs and educators at every level of the Basic Education System are encouraged to support pregnant learners and advocate this Policy at every level by facilitating a non-discriminatory environment in which the pregnant learner can access basic education.
- A critical role of SGBs is to align the policies and regulations that they formulate, as prescribed by the South African Schools Act, with this Policy.
- No educator, school staff member or fellow learner may discriminate against, humiliate or abuse a learner physically, emotionally or psychologically, based on their pregnancy or post-pregnancy status.
- The establishment of critical partnerships by the DBE is central to promoting the psychological and material welfare of pregnant learner

Policy Provisions(2)

2. PREVENTION

Objective: To that learners in the basic education system have access to SRH information and skills, accurate knowledge about delayed sexual debut, abstinence and contraception, and information about the role of gender and power in relationships, in order to make informed life choices and help protect them from unintended pregnancy.

- The DBE is required to ensure that comprehensive protection, delayed sexual debut or abstinence is a **default option** and provide the critical thinking skills and information necessary to make this choice.
- Schools should ensure that age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is provided in accordance with LO curriculum.
- Through collaboration with partners, schools must strengthen advocacy programmes to reduce the incidence of learner pregnancies through initiatives that focus on understanding of sexual and reproductive health rights and awareness of potentially harmful cultural and social practices within the broader communities in which they live.

Policy Provisions (3)

2. PREVENTION CONT.

- The DOH will also endeavor to provide access to contraceptive services through direct linkages with the ISHP or local clinics.
- The DOH will also provide information on access to emergency contraception, the Choice of termination of Pregnancy(CToP) and access to these services.
- Reasonable access to male and female condoms as well as information on their use, will be made available to all learners of 12 years old and above, dependent on their level of inquiry or need.
- Where condoms and information on their use cannot be provided in schools, ISHP nurses will ensure that learners are able to access condoms, as well as requisite information and support services, in a youth-friendly environment.

Policy Provisions(4)

3. CARE, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT LEARNERS.

Objective: To ensure that schools provide a positive and supportive environment where all pregnant learners can access professional advice, information, referrals, treatment, care, counselling and support.

- **Integrated School Health Programme(ISHP,)** provides a comprehensive range of services, including referrals for pregnant learners whose needs cannot be accommodated within the school; for example, referral of learners with babies to the **Department of Social Development** to register for a **Child Support Grant** in terms of the Social Assistance Act.
- Educators, Counsellors and **Learner Support Agents** will be trained to:
 - provide CSE, information on pregnancy and maternity and offer a supportive, stigma-free and youth-friendly school environment
 - teach learners about **gender roles** and orientations(**LGBTIQA**), the influence of power in sexual relationships and the need for responsible and protective behaviour especially for vulnerable girls.

Policy Provisions(5)

3. CARE, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT LEARNERS (Cont.)

Procedures for Handling Incidence of Learner Pregnancy:

Guided by: Employment of Educators (Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998); South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act, 2000 (Act No. 31 of 2000) & DBE Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools.

On confirmation of the **biological father's identity**, if he is:

- a **learner**, he should be **counselled and guided** to assume and sustain his rights and responsibilities.
- an **educator or other member of staff** within the basic education system, he should be **suspended and subjected to disciplinary and legal procedures** as set out in the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998) & SACE Act, 31 of 2000.
- a **person outside the basic education system**, he should be **subjected to judicial enquiry and action** if there is a case to answer on the grounds of coercion, sexual violence and assault or statutory rape.

Policy Provisions(6)

3. CARE, COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT LEARNERS (Cont.)

Measures to deal with Sexual Offences, Child Abuse & Neglect:

Guided by: DBE Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools and sections 110 and 150 of the Children's Act, 2005.

- **Legal implications** for the learner and her partner are that:
 - If the pregnant learner is **under the age of 16**, this would require **mandatory reporting to the SAPS** and entails civil and criminal proceedings against the male partner if he is **over the age of 16 years**. The DBE's Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools and sections 110 and 150 of the Children's Act, 2005, require that such information is reported to a designated child protection organisation, the provincial head of the DSD & SAPS.
- **Partnerships** will be established and coordinated with the social sector and other support organisations to facilitate access to **appropriate support and referral services**. These relationships will ensure that pregnant learners have access to support systems capable of providing for their **physical, psychological and material needs**, either in the school or on referral to partner departments or organisations.

Policy Provisions(7)

4. IMPACT MITIGATION

OBJECTIVE: To mitigated the impact of pregnancy on the affected learners through the provision of a systemic, sustainable, structured, safe and empowering environment.

PREGNANT LEARNER RETENTION & SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

The learners' right to education during and after their pregnancy is guaranteed by the **Constitution of RSA** and guided by the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**, which states, in Article 11(6), that 'State Parties to the Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue **with their education** on the basis of their individual ability'.

Responsibilities of the Schools

- Principals will **encourage** learners to continue with their education before and after delivery of the baby and will **provide appropriate educational support**, where possible.
- The schools will accept and be **flexible** in dealing with **pregnant learner absences**, provided only that the learner is not taking off a **disproportionate** amount of time

Policy Provisions(8)

4. IMPACT MITIGATION (cont.)

PREGNANT LEARNER RETENTION & SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS (Cont.)

Responsibilities of the Schools (Cont.)

- The basis on which the pregnant learner may be reintegrated into the basic education system after delivery will depend on **medical advice** and the point in the calendar year when she left the school for delivery.
- Medical information provided by the learner to her educator, or the principal shall be **strictly confidential** to protect the **learner's right to privacy**
- The school principal will seek a **meeting** with the learner and/or her parents, guardians or caregivers to agree on a **leave of absence**.
- At all times the school, its principal, SMT, SGB, SBST and educators will be **supportive and sympathetic** in each case.

Policy Provisions(9)

4. IMPACT MITIGATION (cont.)

PREGNANT LEARNER RETENTION & SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS (Cont.)

Responsibilities of the Pregnant Learners

- Learners who are over **six months pregnant** will be required to submit a **medical certificate** indicating the **status** of their pregnancy and **estimated delivery date**.
- The pregnant learner will be asked to provide **medical reports** to her appointed educator or school principal, certifying that it is **safe** for her to continue with her schooling, if she wishes to stay in school beyond **32 weeks (8 months)** of pregnancy. If the learner does not provide this information and fails to provide an explanation, she may be asked to take a **leave of absence** until medical proof is provided.

Policy Provisions(10)

4. POLICY MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE: To put sustainable management structures and strategies in place at all levels of the basic education system to ensure implementation of this Policy and to monitor and report its progress and success over the life of the Policy

Management and Coordination

- DBE sub-committee will be responsible for coordinating the multi-sectoral response and ensuring that every partner understands and meets its obligations as regards the implementation of the policy and mandate down to the district and school level. It will further ensure that policy responses are mainstreamed into routine education management at all levels.

Structural Arrangements

- The emphasis on implementation with the goal of reducing and managing the incidence of unintended pregnancy makes structural arrangements important. These arrangements will be systematised to facilitate the regular flow of information up to DBE senior management and down to the district and school level in all nine provincial Departments of Education. An explicit mandate of the DBE's sub-committee is to identify, coordinate, strengthen and report the roles of the institutions and sectors involved.

Policy Provisions(11)

4. POLICY MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION (cont.)

Roles and responsibilities

- The DBE in general and the sub-committee referred to above, will be responsible
- for facilitating the resourcing of the basic education system response, in order to achieve the objectives and outcomes of this Policy.
- schools will be responsible for applying and implementing the principles and provisions of this Policy, taking account of the specific circumstances of these schools, which may include those with limited resources, often in rural areas.
- Parents and communities will also be required to support the school's response wherever possible. Their capacity to play a supporting role will be enhanced through guidance and training.

Strategic Partnerships

- Strategic partnerships will be established with key stakeholder groups and organisations, such as other social sector departments, NGOs, unions, academic and research institutions, SGBs and SGB Associations, SMTs, parent and learner bodies, faith-based, traditional and cultural organisations.

KZNDOE Strategies for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGY
PREVENTION	<p>Advocacy campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department conducts youth-friendly school community events and dialogues to create a platform to deliberate on community specific factors that fuel the scourge of teenage pregnancy and craft collaborative strategies to effectively address the scourge. My Life My Future Peer Education Camps are conducted to provide learners with information and skills to empower them to draw on their inner strength, withstand peer pressure and make decisions that will be in their best interest. Advocacy to School Management Teams and School Governing Bodies on DBE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools <p>Classroom Intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department provides Comprehensive Sexuality Education for all learners in grades 4 to 12 as part of Life Orientation Subject focusing on risk reduction, relationships, decision making and HIV as well as pregnancy prevention messages.

KZNDOE Strategies for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools (Continued)

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGY
PREVENTION	<p>Extra-curricular Health Education Sessions for learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department has employed 750 out of school youth as Learner Support Agents to conduct schoolbased health education sessions for learners focusing on comprehensive sexuality education
	<p>Baby not now intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a learner pregnancy prevention programme which not only educate but also demonstrates through simulated experiences the emotional, social, financial and educational negative effects of early parenthood.
	<p>Educator Support Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen curriculum delivery on the current sexuality education in school, the Department offers ongoing support workshops for Life Orientation educators in highly structured scripted lesson plans on what is to be taught, what is to be learned and assessed in addressing key aspects of sexuality.

KZNDOE Strategies for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools (Continued)

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGY
<p>CARE AND SUPPORT</p>	<p>Learner Support Agents</p> <p>Recruitment of 750 Learner Support Agents (LSAs) in schools and their training in the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Framework material has assisted in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They visit homes of learners who have fallen pregnant and talk to parents and encourage the learners to return to school after their period of confinement; • They visit homes of pregnant learners and offer academic support to the learner in terms of bringing homework to the learner and also offer guidelines on organising learning material and effective learning strategies to the pregnant learners confined to their homes; • Vulnerable learners who are at risk of dropping out of school due to pregnancy are identified and referred to relevant institutions such as DSD, Home Affairs, DoH as well as NGOs.

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