

Community Health Workers to sign a permanent contracts

On 19 June 2020 Gauteng Health MEC Dr Bandile Masuku said 8,500 Community Healthcare Workers (CHW) will be converted into level two employees by the beginning of next month.

But it is already the end of July and there are districts that haven't been given direction about what the terms of signing are under the regulations of COVID-19. The signing of these long awaited permanent contracts is taking place in different clinics due to COVID-19 regulations. Under the new contracts, CHWs will earn R8544.50 per month, with medical aid, housing allowance and pension. CHWs are happy to be signing the contracts, as it has been a long journey of fighting for permanent contracts and having dry days.

"I am very happy, I have been doing this work for 10 years, sometimes we went for months without stipends and had black Decembers. I will believe it when I see the money in my account. This will assist my children as well," said Shaun Hermana. Many CHWs share the sentiments of happiness and prospects of putting the dry seasons behind them.

The Gauteng Community Health Care Forum has been fighting for CHWs to be permanent for years. In 2018, more than 200 CHWs attended the arbitration hearing at Khanya College regarding the status of their employment with Gauteng Department of Health. This arbitration was a response to a dispute made by CHWs in 2016 arguing that they should be made permanent. On 27 September 2018, CHWs were declared permanent workers by Judge James Matshekga.

Department of Health still never implemented the award – In November 2018 CHW'S were called to NASREC By the MEC Arron Motsoaledi who said CHWs are permanent. There was excitement amongst many CHWs, but he later withdrew the statement and said CHWs are absorbed by DOH into the persal system not permanent workers. The persal system means they were moved from getting their stipends under Smart Purse, but like all government workers, they will get their stipends under the persal system, even if they are not permanent employees of the Government.

The absorption will now be converted according to the newly appointed MEC Bandile Masuku. This is a great achievement and it comes after a long struggle.

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