

Media statement by the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs on 2017 Initiation Schools Readiness

For immediate release

22 June 2017

It's all systems go for the 2017 Winter Initiation Schools Season

The winter initiation season is upon us now and the approved initiation schools across the province will be opening their doors to welcome young men and women. Initiates will embark on this sacred path towards adulthood with the hope of coming back into their communities transformed into matured men and woman. This rite of passage is critical to initiates developing into responsible, community-oriented adults and has been a central element of many traditional African cultures since time immemorial and a necessary part of many African communities.

It makes us unique and as the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders working hand in glove with the government, families of the initiates and all relevant stakeholders we hereby reaffirm our commitment to a Zero Death Initiation Season.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you as members of the media for your positive response to this media briefing in preparation for the 2017 Winter Initiation Schools Season. Your continual support and partnership in working with us to ensure a death free initiation school programme is highly appreciated.

This year initiation school programme is scheduled to commence from 24 June and end on 17 July 2017 when schools reopen. We have received 294 applications to run initiation schools. The required documents which were expected to accompany all applications were:

- A letter from the Traditional Council of the area at which the initiation schools will take place, supporting the application;
- A certificate of fitness of the traditional surgeon issued by a medical doctor;
- An environmental report compiled by Environmental Practitioner for the area at which the Initiation School will take place;
- A copy of proclamation and/or title deed confirming authority and/or jurisdiction over the area at which the Initiation School is to be conducted; and
- An undertaking signed by the Senior Traditional Leader regarding acceptance of accountability for the Initiation School

Based on these requirements, of the applications received, 272 initiation schools were approved and the remaining were disapproved. The breakdown for the approved schools per district is as follows:

Capricorn	40
Mopani	30
Sekhukhune	110
Waterberg	79
Vhembe	13

All these approved schools will be published and circulated in all Tribal Offices of our Senior Traditional Leaders in the province. In addition to this, our MEC, Mme Makoma Makhurupetje will run a promo on all approved Initiation Schools so that parents can know as to which ones are approved.

As the House of Traditional Leaders in the province, we have conducted a workshop for all Senior Traditional Leaders and Traditional Surgeons who have been given permits to host these Initiation Schools. Central and of cardinal importance in having conducted this workshop was to brief and prepare the initiation schools stakeholders on precautionary measures to be followed in order to have a smooth process during the initiation period.

It is in this regard that we have to remind ourselves, of the terms of Section 2 (1) of the Northern Province Circumcision Schools Act No. 6 of 1996 which stipulates the following:

- No person shall hold an initiation school without a valid permit issued to him/her in terms;
- No traditional surgeon or any other person is allowed to perform rituals in an initiation school without a certificate of fitness issued for that purpose by a registered medical practitioner authorized by the Premier or authorized officer to do so in terms of Section 3 (1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003;

- No traditional nurse or any other person is allowed to look after initiates in an initiation school without a certificate of attendance of training referred to in regulation 5, provided that the prohibition shall become effective on the day immediately after the conclusion of the training concerned in terms of Section 4(1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003;
- No person below the age of twelve can be admitted to an initiation school in terms of Section 7(1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003;
- No initiate shall be admitted to an initiation school more than five days after the commencement of the school in terms of Section 7(3) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003; and
- No person is allowed to abduct another for the purpose of taking the abducted person to an initiation school in terms of Section 9(1) of Initiation Schools Regulations of 2003.

Our province has an impressive record of running cultural initiation schools. Traditional leadership at all levels in the province has institutionalized the practice with effective governance systems. We want to commend all the relevant stakeholders and encourage them to keep to that standard. In an effort to prevent the unnecessary loss of lives, we request parents to send their children to the initiation schools that are approved.

We therefore, call upon parents to authenticate the legitimacy of initiation schools they intend to send their children with their respective Traditional Authorities. There will be zero tolerance to people who want to take chances by running initiation schools without permits. We also want to re-emphasize that we will not be lenient to people who will be running illegal initiation schools. As the house we will not rest until all perpetrators who would have been discovered to have violated all initiation schools regulations have been brought to book. We will work with law our enforcement agencies, to prevent the unnecessary loss of young lives and also to ensure that the rights of this young people are not violated.

It is our wish and commitment as Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders that during this initiation season, no lives should be lost.

I thank you

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