

Have your say on substance use policy

The Department of Social Development has reminded South Africans to make comments on the gazetted Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorder Policy.



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On 10 November 2023, the department gazetted the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Use Disorder Policy for public comments and inputs.

“Due to the urgency of addressing the persistent challenge of alcohol and drug misuse and abuse particularly among children, the department wishes to urge South Africans to submit their comments and inputs on or before 10 December 2023,” the department said in a statement.

The public comments can be submitted to Vathiswad@dsd.gov.za. The gazette can be found [here](#).

The Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorder Policy seeks to provide a comprehensive framework to address challenges related to alcohol and other drugs faced by communities.

It also sets out feasible strategies for the management of substance use disorders.

It further provides a platform for the functioning, involvement, and participation of various stakeholders in the prevention of and treatment for alcohol and other drugs use and abuse.

The policy will also provide for the functioning of the Alcohol and Drug Advisory Council of South Africa (ADAC-SA) currently known as the Central Drug Authority (CDA).

Three pillars

This policy framework, according to the department, is underpinned by three pillars which are the Demand Reduction Pillar - aimed at preventing the onset of substance abuse or dependence as well as eliminating or reducing the effect of conditions conducive to the use of dependence forming substances.

The second one is the Supply Reduction Pillar - aimed at reducing the supply of both legal and illegal drugs. Supply Reduction Pillar is the responsibility of law enforcement.

Lastly is the Harm Reduction Pillar which includes treatment of substance use disorders and related activities aimed at reducing harm caused by use and abuse of substances in communities. It involves reducing the damage caused by substance abuse to individuals and communities.

The Minister of Social Development Lindiwe Zulu said in October in her foreword on the policy, that the reduction of harm caused by substance use and abuse can be achieved through prevention, early intervention, treatment and other related measures, aftercare and reintegration services.

Enhancing services

“The policy framework advocates for the implementation of evidence-based prevention, treatment and support services. These services are to replace less effective prevention services, treatment and recovery support services with approaches that have a sturdier foundation of scientific support. Developing services that remove barriers to recovery and enhance individual's recovery capital. This Policy framework will thus be translated into a legislation that will guide the sector in the delivery of integrated, evidence-based programmes, services and projects.

“I am confident that the restructuring of the monitoring and coordinating structure formerly known as Central Drug Authority (CDA), will strengthen the concerted efforts by all stakeholders to address the scourge of substance abuse,” Zulu said at that time.

The following are the objectives of the Policy on the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Use Disorder:

- Address challenges faced by the sector in dealing with the problem of substance abuse.
- To embrace a balanced, integrated and evidence-based approach to the domestic alcohol and drug use and abuse.
- To invest in building safe communities through appropriate alcohol and other drugs prevention and impact minimisation strategies;
- Facilitate the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of responsive interventions for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.
- Provide a platform for functioning, involvement and participation of various stakeholders in the prevention of and treatment for substance abuse.
- Address the identified gaps in the legislation.

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