



NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



SERVING EDUCATION SINCE 1904

Visit our website: www.naptosa.org.za

NNF 12 of 2022 31 May 2022

CHILD PROTECTION WEEK 29 MAY – 05 JUNE 2022

This week South Africa commemorates Child Protection Week under the theme, “Let us all Protect Children during Covid-19 and Beyond”. The purpose is to highlight the importance of **protecting children from gender-based violence, neglect, lack of primary healthcare and education, and the violation of their constitutional rights.**

How effective have we really been as a society in protecting our children?

It is of great concern that during the pandemic many children’s constitutional rights were infringed upon daily, and mostly by the very same people who were meant to protect them.

Rejection is a form of abuse that is often not recognised as such by the perpetrators. Abuse based on real or perceived sexual orientation or **gender** identity should not be tolerated. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Constitution), provides ‘everyone’ with the right to education. Section 29 adds hereto that no one may be unfairly discriminated against based on their sex, gender, or sexual orientation in the context of education. **ALL children must be protected at ALL times.**

Cyber bullying (the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature) has increased significantly, with more learners having access to mobile devices, the internet, and social media platforms. It can cause the victim to struggle with **mental health issues, increased stress and anxiety, depression, acting out violently, and low self-esteem.** Cyberbullying can also result in long-lasting emotional effects, even if the bullying has stopped. An estimated 23 suicides take place every day in South Africa, along with a total of 460 attempted suicides, many of them children. That alone is a crisis.

All stakeholders in education, especially parents, need to teach learners how to use the internet responsibly. Age-appropriate content also needs to be emphasised. Exposing a child to anything that they are not emotionally ready to deal with, can be considered as another form of abuse. Internet trolling by sexual deviants has reached epidemic proportions and parents are simply ignorant to this crime against their children.

NAPTOSA has noted with great concern the increase in kidnappings around the country. South African Police (SAPS) stats released in February 2022 revealed even more worrying data. The months April to September 2021, showed 4,232 kidnappings (over 23 a day on average). In these six months alone, reported kidnappings already stood at 70% of the previous year’s total. The Minister of Police reported that the murder rate against children increased by 22.6% and attempted murder by 30% quarter on quarter.

According to “Missing Children South Africa”, opportunistic kidnappings, ransom kidnappings, traditional medicine kidnappings, and human trafficking give rise to this massive increase in the number of abductions taking place across the country.

NAPTOSA would like to urge parents to look out for themselves and their children amid this increase in kidnapping, human trafficking and murder/attempted murder cases.

Teachers have an important role to play in child protection. This lies not only in the detection and reporting of possible cases of child abuse but also in multi-disciplinary teamwork, and in contributing to the ongoing support and monitoring of the abused child. It also involves educating the learners on the different types of abuse as well as the different reporting structures available.

NAPTOSA hails all the dedicated members in the field who tirelessly protect and encourage learners daily to be a better version of themselves.

NAPTOSA also condemns those teachers and education support staff who exploit and abuse the learners placed in their care. We believe that all perpetrators should face the full wrath of the law!

This child protection week, we support government's call for all South Africans to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society do not suffer abuse. **But simply making calls is not enough!**

Until there are drastic changes in respect of consequences, expeditious justice, punishing those who keep silent and in doing so collude with the perpetrators, nothing will change.

Where is the Department of Justice?

The Department of Women and Children?

The Department of Basic and Higher Education

The School and Communities at large who are aware of these diabolical acts but are doing absolutely nothing to stop or prevent them.

What tangible measures have been put in place since last year? Platitudes will no longer suffice.

We need concerted, perpetual, concrete, effective measures with deadlines and solid, definite measures that will be taken against all guilty parties.

It is in our hands to stop the cycle of neglect, abuse, violence, and exploitation of children.

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business!

Mr. BL Manuel

Executive Director