



To: **Principals**

Topic: **Support School Based Support Team (SBST) on Psychosocial Support**

Message Objective(s): **To assist principals to support SBST on PSS to enhance learning recovery for all learners.**

Message: Support the functionality of the SBST on PSS so that all learners are given equal opportunities to recover learning losses caused by the pandemic.

Nearly 3 500 000 children in South Africa are orphans due to HIV and AIDS according to UNICEF. And now South Africa has the highest number of COVID 19 orphans on the continent since the pandemic started. There were 94 625 lost parents and guardians in the past year, a new study has revealed, and these children attend the schooling system. Many of them have missed schooling in the past year as they dealt with their losses. Schools should therefore provide an enabling environment for these children to cope with adversity and recover the learning losses /gaps suffered in the last 2 years.

The SBST must be led by the principal of the school. Too often this role is left to the SBST coordinator. The principal must provide the psychosocial support to this important structure of the school. The covid 19 pandemic has seen the demand for psychosocial support in schools and the principal must provide the necessary support drawing information and practical steps from the module on PSS produced by the NECT in partnership with DBE.

The principals must build capacity for their schools to provide psychosocial support to learners and teachers so that they optimally use time available to recover learning losses. Here are some practical steps that principals can take.

- i) Track the orphans/child headed families, those failing to cope with the adversity of the pandemic, immigrants, those without documentation and children abusing drugs or are being abused, pregnant children and children living off the streets.
- ii) Analyze, display, and present the data for interventions.
- iii) Develop a PSS model for your school focusing on the most challenging PSS needs you have at your school for example drug abuse or teenage pregnancy.
- iv) Provide interventions to deal with issues so that learners attend school and can cope with challenges they are having.
- v) Track absenteeism and find and deal with the cause instead of only reporting the stats.

In conclusion the NECT partnering with DBE will continue to equip managers of schools and civil society with training on psychosocial support and principals and schools can reach out to them through our Head Office and provincial offices.

The following guide is available for use by principals. **Psychosocial Support: A Guide for South African Schools** and is available on www.nect.org.za

The 4th wave brings with it restrictions and as families we need to heed the government's call to continue to practice non pharmaceutical precautions like washing hands, sanitizing and wearing of masks.



Let us encourage our children to wear masks and avoid unnecessary gatherings where they may contract the disease. New cases are showing an unusually high numbers of children contracting covid 19. If your children are 12 years and older, encourage them to vaccinate and stay say. There is need to balance the restrictions with time to play and bond with parents and friends during the festive season. Here are some tips on promoting well being and resilience of our children.

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