

Masks and sanitisers for Tshwane schools

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With Covid-19 lockdown restrictions easing and schools starting to open again, there is a growing concern around the safety of teachers and learners. Basil Manuel, President of the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), has said although they wanted schools to reopen they were concerned about the protocols being followed. These include: wearing of face masks, physical distancing, sanitising and washing hands frequently.



From left to right: MP Ms Simphiwe Mbatha handing over much needed supplies to Mrs L. Delpont and Mrs A. Fourie of the TransOranje School of the Deaf.

To help teachers prepare and be ready to open up their classrooms and welcome students back, in a staggered format, Bonitas Medical Fund collaborated with OnPoint HealthCare, and Honourable MP Ms Simphiwe Mbatha to distribute 1,500 face masks and sanitisers to 80 schools in the Tshwane area.

"As a medical aid for South Africa we understand the importance of adhering to the guidelines set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and our Government, to limit the spread of the coronavirus," says Lee Callakoppen, Principal Officer of Bonitas. "However, we also know that some schools are battling to provide their teachers with the correct protective equipment so we decided to step in and lend a helping hand."

The 1,500 face masks are being given to teachers at 80 primary, secondary and special needs schools in areas within Tshwane – including Atteridgeville, Mamelodi, Inner City Central, Inner City West, Centurion, Soshanguve, Mawiga, Metsweding and

Hammanskraal. In addition, each school has also been provided with a sanitising stand and sanitiser.

Bonitas has also provided 480 infographic posters and shared 10 educational videos with the schools. These all address the different Covid-19 precautions and why they are important to follow; the videos are in four languages.

"The roll-out of this project has been made possible by Ms Mbatha who assisted with the introductions and negotiations with the various schools. It's a great example of how a public/private partnership can work to solve a problem," says Callakoppen.

"Ensuring that educators are safe during the pandemic is essential as is making sure that learners continue to complete the school curriculum. We are thankful that Bonitas has helped support us in driving this initiative," said Ms Mbatha.

Bonitas has introduced a number of initiatives and accelerated others during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of which is virtual care. "This is free to anyone, not just our members," says Callakoppen. "South Africans are encouraged to register on the Bonitas Mobile App during the pandemic and book an online consultation with a doctor from our network. The doctor will then engage with you in a virtual video consultation on any medical issue, not just around the Covid-19 virus."

This virtual consultation facility and how to use the app has been demonstrated to teachers and learners at the 80 schools involved in the project so they too can access free GP consultations until the end of the school year.

Callakoppen says, "Forty-seven million people are without private medical aid cover in South Africa. It is essential that public and private enterprises work together during the pandemic to ensure the safety of everyone."

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