

What is happening at SASSA?

SASSA Beneficiary Biometric Enrolment and Verification solution

As members are aware, SASSA has reintroduced the Beneficiary Biometric Enrolment and Verification solution, which was initially piloted in 2018 but suspended owing to concerns from the SASSA National Bargaining Forum (SNBF) regarding job grade and function evaluations for Grant Administrators, updates to norms and standards, SASSA infrastructure readiness for ICT initiatives, and challenges with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) system availability. The employer reported that some of these concerns have been addressed, including the redesign of processes, updates to infrastructure, and a revised MOU with the DHA for a direct system interface. The concern relating to the job grade and evaluations for Grant Administrators was delayed by the lack of an approved grading system by the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA), which was only approved early this year. The employer indicated that SASSA has submitted a request to the DPSA to evaluate the positions with consideration given to all new functions.

A pilot of the Beneficiary Biometric is being conducted in four offices across four provinces, which are KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga, and North West. The employer reported that so far, 9 648 transactions were processed, with 7 570 verified and 2 078 failed. Some of the challenges and lessons learned during the pilot included intermittent DHA interface availability and capacity challenges. Capacity challenges are exacerbated by segregation of application types (online vs walk-ins). Furthermore, there have been biometric failures owing to undeveloped children's fingerprints and unreliable scanners, as well as the workaround processes for DHA interface downtime still delaying client outcomes. The employer has requested approval from the SNBF to expand the pilot by increasing the number of sites across all nine provinces and providing staff training on the system. Organised labour's consent is sought for implementing the proposed expansion plan. The PSA acknowledges that the system offers potential benefits in safeguarding the integrity of SASSA's grant administration by reducing opportunities for fraud by ineligible applicants. Members may consider permitting the employer to extend the pilot to a limited number of offices per province. This approach will allow the PSA and the employer to evaluate the effectiveness of the Beneficiary Biometric Enrolment and Verification solution. The PSA will closely monitor the rollout process to ensure that SNBF concerns regarding capacity and system readiness are addressed before proceeding with full national implementation.

Members are encouraged to share their views on this matter and provide the PSA with a mandate on whether to approve the pilot's expansion. **Inputs should be submitted via email to aubrey.mabotsa@psa.co.za by 3 December 2024.**

Proposed Collective Agreement on Overtime

SASSA presented a draft agreement seeking to vary the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)* provisions on overtime to address operational needs. The agreement will allow employees in the General Support Services Unit, or others assisting with driving staff attending bereavement events (as per the SASSA Bereavement Policy), and those monitoring weekend deep cleaning activities to work overtime beyond the *BCEA*'s current limits of three hours per day or ten hours per week. This arrangement ensures that these employees are compensated for the additional hours worked, addressing the lawful payment of extended overtime as required by operational demands. Employees stand to benefit from this agreement as it formalises the payment for extra hours worked in situations where operational requirements exceed *BCEA* limits. Whilst all other SASSA employees will remain regulated by standard overtime provisions, those involved in bereavement-related transport and deep cleaning activities will gain financial recognition for their extended work. This ensures fair compensation and supports employees in fulfilling some of these critical functions without breaching existing legal frameworks.

Members are urged to study the draft Agreement (*attached*) and provide the PSA with inputs on or before 3 December 2024 to aubrey.mabotsa@psa.co.za.

Request for member inputs: Proposed Amendment to FTSS Agreement

Members will recall that a collective agreement on the election and release of Full-Time Shop Stewards (FTSS) was signed and implemented in 2021. The agreement allows the PSA to elect and release five FTSS across different regions. It also stipulates that only one FTSS may be elected per region between the two recognised unions in SASSA, except in Gauteng. This clause has created challenges in planning and resource allocation, as both unions sometimes face high service demands in the same region and require the capacity of a FTSS. To address this, the PSA has proposed amending clause 7.1.5 of the agreement to allow each union to elect one FTSS in any region where needed, even if the other union has already elected a FTSS in that region. The PSA will be engaging the employer on this proposed amendment at the next SNBF meeting.

Members are encouraged to review the *attached* draft FTSS Agreement and submit their inputs by 3 December 2024 to aubrey.mabotsa@psa.co.za.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website, send an email to ask@psa.co.za, or contact PSA Provincial Offices.

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