



FACT SHEET

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# SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH FACILITY (CLINIC)



**Health is not only a result of someone's individual behaviours. Politics, family, social norms, violence, economics, policy and so much more - they all impact on someone's health. There needs to be many interventions to make sure young people take care of their health. This guide looks at only one intervention - providing a quality health facility.**

## Health and The Constitution

Health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being, a robust and accessible health system is necessary to fulfil this right.

Sections 27 and 28 of the Constitution provide for “everyone to have the right of access to health care including reproductive health care, for no one to be refused emergency medical treatment and for every child to have the right to basic health care services”.

## Public Health in SA

- The high levels of poverty and unemployment in SA mean that health care remains largely the burden of the state with the National Department of Health holding overall responsibility for health care
- Public health consumes around 11% of the government's total budget and is allocated mostly to nine provincial departments
- This budget is higher than the 5% of GDP recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO)
- The annual expenditure of the public healthcare sector is around R122.4 billion to serve 84% of the population (42 million people)
- Despite this high expenditure, health outcomes are poor in comparison with other similar middle-income countries, reflecting an inequity in health care in the country
- The public sector is further hampered by a shortage of key medical personnel
- Each year, about 1,200 medical students graduate and provide two years of community service in understaffed hospitals and clinics
- The gap in health care service provision was filled largely by tens of thousands of community health care workers who

provided home-based care, Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) and the monitoring of TB treatment protocols

- Primary health care clinics are the first line of access for people needing health care services

## Clinics in SA

- Since 1994, more than 1,600 clinics have been built or upgraded
- There are 4,200 public health facilities in South Africa
- Each clinic services an average of 13,718 persons per year
- This number exceeds the WHO guidelines of 10,000 per clinic
- People averaged 2.5 visits per year to public health facilities
- For 2.5 million South Africans, their nearest clinic is more than 5 kilometres away from their homes
- There is one doctor for every 4,219 people in the public health sector
- The public health system allocates greater resources towards preventative health care and health education towards preventing illnesses (so that smaller numbers of people need to ascend the ladder to access more specialised and expensive care)



## Changes since Democracy, 1994

**Access** to clinics has improved significantly since 1994 but in many instances, the **quality** of health care provided at this level has fallen.

Why is this? What is happening at clinics?

The 2012 National Health Facilities Baseline Audit reported on a survey of 3,356 clinics and community health centres that found that:

- most clinics had facility managers, but nearly half of the clinics had no visiting doctors
- 84% had no assistance from a pharmacist or pharmacy assistant
- 11% had no lay counsellors
- 57% had no administration support and
- 79% have no information management staff
- the burden of HIV is immense (with 6.19 million South Africans, 11.2% of the population of 54.9 million, living with the disease)
- trauma and interpersonal violence has created additional stress on the public health system and on its human and physical resources (ex. vacancy rates range from 13 to 40% across provinces with an average of 31% for South Africa)
- the chronic shortage of health care workers inherited from apartheid has become an acute and catastrophic shortage.
- **Legislation** around health was improved. This included the National Health Act, 61 of 2003, which provides a framework for a single health system for South Africa and for basic health care rights, including the right to emergency treatment and the right to participate in decisions regarding one's health.
- Development of the **HIV/Strategic Plan** to reduce the number of new HIV infections.
- National Policy on Quality of Care has been adopted to provide a **set of guidelines** to

standardise the quality of primary health care delivery across all the provinces.

- Implementation of a programme of **cervical screening of women** to reduce the high number of deaths from cervical cancer in women.
- Implementation of a system to **record all maternal deaths** in order to reduce the mortality rate and also for statistical purposes so as to improve monitoring.
- The rates of children receiving **immunisation** has continued to steadily increase through the state's immunisation programmes which aim to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, TB, cholera and pertussis.
- **Child health improvement** measures have included the expansion and strengthening of school health services.

## What is an Ideal Clinic?

An 'Ideal Clinic' is defined as a clinic with good infrastructure, care and community partnerships. SA has 3,477 primary health care facilities. Of these, only 322 have been found to be Ideal Clinics. The following characteristics and criteria are used to evaluate clinics to see if they are an Ideal Facility. You may use these criteria to look at your own local clinics, and in interviewing the nurses and patients, understand if your clinic is anywhere close to an Ideal Facility. We have chosen only a few criteria to focus on:

### Infrastructure:

- Physical condition of the building and spaces inside (and maintenance)
- Essential medical equipment
- Hygiene and cleanliness
- Emergency patient transport
- Security
- Disaster protocols (especially in terms of water and electricity back-ups)



### Staffing/Human Resources (HR):

- Skilled staff available (doctors, mental health counsellors)
- Social workers
- Staff positions filled
- HR - recruitment
- Information and communication tools
- Laboratory testing services

### Organisational systems:

- Good administrative processes
  - management of client appointments
  - bookkeeping
- Management systems for staff
- Managing patient health records
- Financial management
- Referral systems
- Protocols and guidelines are in place
  - Infection prevention control
  - Protocols for working with youth
  - Protocols for working with chronic patients
  - Protocols around confidentiality

### Supplies:

- Essential drug/medication supplies in stock
- Adequate bulk supplies

### Partners:

- The clinic partner with NGOs/CBOs to increase reach and provide better services

### Patient Care:

- Client waiting times
- Managing patient health records
- Reception service - this is often the first impression patients will get of a facility
- Communication of services - is there an information board that explains the services offered at the clinic?
- Clinic staff must ensure that patients' privacy is respected at all times
- Clinically stable patients with chronic conditions (HIV, hypertension (high blood pressure) type 2 diabetes, asthma, etc.) are able to collect pre-dispensed medication.

Batho Pele principles are aligned to the Constitution. They require public servants to be polite, open and transparent and to deliver good service to the public.

- Consultation  
Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.
- Service standards  
Citizens should be told what level and quality of public service they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.
- Access  
All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.
- Courtesy  
Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- Information  
Citizens should be given full accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.
- Openness and transparency  
Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
- Redress  
If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
- Value for money  
Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.



Patients must have access to a wide range of health professionals to deliver a comprehensive health service. This can happen at the facility or through appropriate referrals.

- Patients that require consultation with a medical practitioner have access to them at the facility at least once a week
- Patients have access to oral health services
- Patients have access to occupational therapy services
- Patients have access to physiotherapy services
- Patients have access to dietetic services
- Patients have access to social work services
- Patients have access to radiography services
- Patients have access to ophthalmic (eye health) service
- Patients have access to mental health services
- Patients have access to speech and hearing services
- Staff dispensing medicine have access to the support of a pharmacist

## TALKING POINTS

### DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT LOCAL CLINICS & HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUR RADIO SHOWS

- Our local clinic - the work it does on a weekly basis
- How can we support the work of our local clinic?
- A day in the life of a nurse at our local clinic
- Our clinic's health goals and how it is delivering them

## CHOOSE AN ANGLE

A day in the life of a nurse at our local clinic

### How to talk about: A day in the life of a nurse at our local clinic

- What a typical day looks like for a local clinic nurse
- What motivated him/her to become a nurse?
- What are the highs and lows of being a nurse?
- What would he/she like to see improve at the clinic long term?
- Does crime affect your job in any way?
- What support do nurses need?
- Can patients and community help make services better at the clinic - how?
- What health message do you want listeners to hear today?