

Mental health care should be centralised - Sanco

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Cape Town - The institutional arrangements governing the care of patients at mental health care facilities should be centralised, the South African National Civic Organisation says.

"Urgent action needs to be taken to ensure that mental health patients like all other citizens receive affordable and quality health care and that implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) policy is accelerated," Sanco spokesperson Jabu Mahlangu said in a statement on Saturday.

Sanco's comments come on the back of damning reports into the deaths of 94 mentally ill and intellectually impaired patients released by national Health Ombudsman Professor Malegapuru Makgoba this week.

Mahlangu conveyed condolences to families that lost loved ones during the Life Esidimeni incidents. He commended the established of a task team to oversee the speedy transfer of patients who are still with unregistered NGOs back to public health institutions.

"Public health institutions must be upgraded to deal comprehensively with the current crisis and frustration of provincial health departments that are burdened with exorbitant and long-term cost of private care homes for the patients," he said.

Mahlangu said that the resignation of Gauteng Health MEC Qhedani Mahlangu in the aftermath of the investigation is evidence of remorse, respect for public office and accountability.

"It bodes well for our maturing constitutional democracy for public office bearers to take responsibility for blunders within portfolios they are overseeing irrespective of whether they were directly or indirectly responsible," he said.

"Other state entities should take a leaf from the MEC's action for policy failures."

He said it would restore confidence in public institutions "eroded by protracted legal battles and court rulings" against them.

He also commended Eastern Cape Premier Phumulo Masualle's halting of transfer of patients from Life Esidimeni private care homes to NGOs in the province as decisive intervention

By Paul Herman, News24