



co-operative governance,
human settlements & traditional affairs

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Samewerkende Regering
Menslike Nedersettings
en Tradisionele Sake

UmNyango weTjhebiso
laboRhulumende
zokuHlaliswa kwabantu
neenDaba zenDabuko

Press Release

30 May 2025

MASHILO DECLARES ZERO TOLERANCE ON ILLEGAL INITIATION SCHOOLS

Parents in Mpumalanga have been urged to take full responsibility of their children during the initiation ritual to passage period. The Mpumalanga Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) has sent a strong warning to bogus traditional surgeons intending to run initiation schools without legal permits in the Province. MEC Speed Mashilo pointed out that it is quite disheartening to know that there are initiation schools that are still operating without authorization from the department despite efforts to educate everyone about the importance and adherence to proper procedures.

Mashilo urged parents to make sure that initiation schools are registered before taking their children. "Parents must take a centre stage to ensure their children are safe during the traditional ritual of passage to manhood. It is vital to take your children for medical screening before enrolling them at an approved initiation schools" expressed MEC Mashilo. He added that all senior traditional leaders are made aware of all the approved schools within their jurisdiction and a list of those schools is shared with each Traditional Council.

CoGHSTA's Acting Head, Mr. Samkelo Ngubane, explained that according to Section 28 of the Customary Initiation Act of 2021, taking people to initiation schools is illegal without the parents' consent. "Initiation is a voluntary customary practice and no person may be forced into attending any initiation school or undergo any initiation practice" emphasized Mr Ngubane. He further alluded that those found to be forcefully dragging innocent boys to circumcision will face the wrath of the law. The department has received a total of 405 applications to conduct initiation schools this year and approved 403 of those, whereas 02 of them were declined due to non-compliance. Initiation schools are set to start 21 June and conclude their activities of 21 July 2025. Starting such school before the set date or continue with the initiation school activities beyond the 21 July will render the institution illegal and police will deal with offenders.

Mashilo stressed that circumcision must be performed by either a medical practitioner or a person who has been trained to perform circumcision and who has knowledge of the child's social and cultural practice. The department is working closely with Senior Traditional leaders, Ingoma Forum, Ingoma Task Team, Department of Health and the South African Police (SAPS) to ensure a zero tolerance on illegal initiation schools. Initiation as a rite of passage is not an exclusive monopoly of households, but a shared tradition and cultural practice by the entire nation, thus cooperation between parents and community to ensure a safer winter customary initiation and zero death is paramount. Communities are encouraged to report any suspicious activities or illegal initiation schools to relevant authorities.

ISSUED BY THE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORATE
CO-OPERATING GOVERNANCE, HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS



