



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEC FOR HEALTH ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, CALLS FOR URGENT MANAGEMENT REFORM

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KZN HEALTH MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane has warmly congratulated Ms Penelope “Penny” Msimango on her recent appointment as the Head of Department (HoD), saying it will bring stability, continuity, and renewed focus to the Department’s strategic direction. The announcement was formally made today, during the Department’s monthly Management Committee (MANCO) meeting, where the MEC introduced the new HoD to senior leadership.

Ms Msimango has been serving in this role in an acting capacity and now assumes it permanently, with a strengthened mandate to drive systemic transformation, organisational reform, and improved service delivery.

In welcoming the new HoD, MEC Simelane said the appointment marks a decisive turning point for the Department.

“The appointment of Ms Msimango marks a new chapter for this department. She brings extensive institutional knowledge and a steadfast commitment to public service. She is entrusted with the urgent task of steering this department back to stability, accountability, and excellence.

“We must revisit how management functions at every level. All managers will be expected to manage effectively, accountably, and in line with the highest standards of public administration. This overhaul is non-negotiable.”

The MEC further assured the new HoD of her full support as the Department embarks on a period of intensive organisational strengthening.

A highly respected healthcare professional and seasoned administrator, Ms Msimango hails from Ohlange in Inanda, north of Durban, and grew up in Umlazi.

Her career began as a professional nurse trained at McCord Hospital, followed by further qualifications at UNISA which enabled her to train nurses at the KwaZulu-Natal College of Nursing. She later contributed to major health system initiatives including:

Pioneering the HIV Testing and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes;
Developing the Community Care Giver (CCG) programme;
Serving as Head of Programmes and later District Director in eThekweni, and;
Providing strategic leadership as Acting Deputy Director-General for Clinical Support Services, including during the province's COVID-19 response.
Her administrative experience, institutional memory, and grounding in community health place her among the most seasoned leaders in the provincial health sector.

Accepting her appointment, Ms Msimango expressed gratitude to MEC Simelane and the Provincial Cabinet for their confidence in her leadership.

"I take this as an honour and a privilege to work with the team that the Department has, particularly the senior management team. We are all equal here as a team, and I believe we can achieve great things if we work together.

"The task ahead is not simple, it is complex. Over the past few months in the HoD's office, I've realised that a lot of work still needs to be done, work that borders on a complete overhaul. We all work very hard in all directorates, but often in silos, which undermines our collective energy.

"Our first task is to build a cohesive, highly effective team and ensure the centre holds. If the centre doesn't hold, we won't meet our objectives. We must also review our organisational structure and fill critical gaps, especially in Monitoring & Evaluation within Supply Chain and Finance, so that our footprint reaches every level of the system.

"We are also finalising a recovery plan and a change-management strategy, which we hope to complete by the end of January."

She emphasised the importance of prevention, healthy lifestyles, treatment adherence and youth-focused health advocacy — principles that have guided her throughout her career.

MEC Simelane outlined the priority issues the new HoD will confront:

1. Financial Turnaround

Budget reductions since 2019 have placed severe pressure on operations. The HoD is mandated to implement tighter controls and innovative efficiency measures.

2. Staff Motivation and Retention

Vacancy freezes have resulted in staff shortages and burnout. Immediate interventions are required to stabilise morale and retain critical staff.

3. Service Delivery Restoration

Fixing basic management and operational issues is essential to restore public confidence in the health system.

“The people of this province deserve a health department that works for them,” the MEC said. “With Ms Msimango’s leadership and the collective effort of our staff, we are determined to deliver exactly that.”

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