



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

MEC SIMELANE'S NEW YEAR'S EVE AND FESTIVE SEASON WARNING: "GIVING CHILDREN ALCOHOL IS DISGRACEFUL, DANGEROUS AND AMOUNTS TO ABUSE"

"We can't sacrifice our children for social media content-creation," says the MEC

31 DECEMBER 2025

AS PEOPLE ACROSS KWAZULU-NATAL prepare to usher in the new year with various festivities, KZN Health MEC Ms Nomagugu Simelane has issued a strong warning against the practice of adults giving alcohol to children or encouraging them to drink it, saying this behaviour is disgraceful, dangerous, irresponsible, and harmful to children's development and safety.

Speaking at Madadeni (Amajuba District) yesterday, during the official introduction of Lenacapavir – an injection that is taken only twice a year to prevent HIV infection - MEC Simelane said she was deeply disturbed by a recent video circulating on social media showing adults encouraging children to consume alcohol.

"Let me be very clear. Giving alcohol to a child or encouraging a child to drink alcohol is abuse. It damages their brain, it endangers their lives, and it robs them of the protection that every child deserves."

The video shows children, some seemingly as young as five years old, being encouraged to stand in a line holding alcoholic drinks while adults film and laugh. Some of the children appear visibly uncomfortable.

"This is not a joke. This is not harmless fun. A child's body cannot process alcohol like an adult's body can," she said. "Even a small amount of alcohol can poison a child and lead to vomiting, breathing problems, loss of consciousness and even death."

The MEC explained that alcohol interferes with brain development, memory, learning, emotional regulation and physical growth in children, and increases the risk of alcohol addiction, mental health problems and risky behaviour later in life.

"When adults introduce children to alcohol, it's a disgrace. A huge disgrace, because they are not teaching them to be responsible. Instead, they are teaching them that self-harm is normal and that harmful behaviour is entertainment. But children must be protected, not exposed. Our communities must draw a clear line and say we will not sacrifice our children's health for so-called content creation, entertainment or attention," said Simelane.

The MEC also issued a stern warning to pregnant women about the dangers of alcohol consumption.

"Sometimes I get asked why it's any of our business when women drink alcohol. But we do have a serious vested interest in this as the Department of Health, because when a woman drinks while she's pregnant, she jeopardises the health, development and wellbeing of that unborn child. Even if we may seem like we are targeting women when we speak out against this practice, it is our responsibility because it is a serious problem."

She further emphasized that “there is no safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy. Not even one sip. Alcohol can cause lifelong brain damage and physical disabilities in an unborn child.”

While her main message focused on children and alcohol, the MEC also called on people to act responsibly during the remainder of the festive season and beyond.

“We call on people to reduce excessive drinking, reject drugs and gangsterism, and take responsibility for their sexual behaviour so that we prevent unplanned pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV,” she said.

The MEC welcomed the introduction of Lenacapavir as a major advance in HIV prevention, noting that it offers long-acting protection and reduces the risk of missing daily doses.

Known colloquially as “uLena”, the injection will be available at healthcare facilities in KZN in February 2026.

MEC Simelane added: “Lenacapavir gives people an additional, powerful option to protect themselves against HIV, especially those who struggle with taking pills every day,” she said.

However, she cautioned that Lenacapavir is not a licence for risky behaviour.

“It does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections; and it does not prevent unplanned pregnancy. People must still use condoms, still act responsibly, and still protect themselves and their partners,” she said.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health