Published on *Treatment Action Campaign* (http://tac.org.za/community)

TAC welcomes SANAC's call for Government to lift antiretroviral treatment moratorium in the Free State

By *moderator*
Created *2009/02/08 - 10:27pm*
8 February, 2009 - 22:27 ? moderator

The decision of the Free State government to scale back essential health care services has resulted in thousands of patients in immediate need of care being turned away from Free State clinics since 1 November 2008. This has caused avoidable deaths and illness.

The TAC and our partner, the AIDS Law Project, welcome the recommendation that was made by the Program Implementation Committee (PIC) of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) on 5 February, proposing that the moratorium on access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for new patients in the Free State be lifted by Monday 9 February. In response the Director General of the Department of Health, who co-chairs the SANAC PIC, offered to provide a plan on how this situation could be addressed by Monday, 9th February 2009. This is a positive development.

At the SANAC meeting representatives from the Department of Health and the Treasury confirmed that the department is facing a financial crisis and that the demand for anti-retroviral treatment is growing rapidly. It seems that there is a risk that similar budgeting shortfalls may affect the ART programmes in other provinces in the near future. TAC and the ALP calls on the Minister of Finance to ensure that the 2009/2010 budget increases funds to the provinces in order to ensure sustainable ART programmes and improve the quality of the health service generally.

The TAC and ALP call on government to act on the SANAC recommendations, and to confirm that it will reinstate the ART roll-out in the Free State as soon as possible. If the moratorium on access to ART in the Free State is not lifted by Monday 9 February 2009, or on a date soon thereafter provided by the DOH, TAC and the ALP will mobilize nationally and if necessary prepare legal action against the Free State province.

We continue to request that the reasons for the budgeting shortfall in the Free State be established, and that questions posed by the AIDS Law Project in letters to the Minister of Health, Minister of Finance and others be addressed. If the Free State Department of Health failed to follow legal process in pursuing emergency budget allocations, or to mount a contingency plan that could have prevented the grave impact of these cuts, the provincial leadership must be held accountable. Similar problems must be avoided in other Provinces.

The ALP and TAC will closely monitor the implementation of the enrollment of people in the Free State ART programme. As soon as a date is set to re-start the programme, we call on the Free State government to publicise widely the reinstatement of the programme and to assist health care workers to eliminate waiting lists. We call on the private health providers and hospitals in the Free State to volunteer to assist with this.

TAC is holding a press conference on 10 February to discuss access to ART in the Free State and any progress on the moratorium.
Date: 10 February
Time: 8h30-9h30
Venue: TAC boardroom, Ubuntu Clinic, Site B Day Hospital, Sulani Drive, Khayelitsha, Western Cape

TAC Free State is holding a march on 10 February concerning poor service delivery on anti-retroviral medicine.

Date: 10 February
Time: 9h00-12h30
Venue: Gathering at Poli Clinic at the Pelonomi Hospital, ending at Bopleo House (Office for the MEC for Health), Free State

TAC Western Cape is holding a picket to call on the Minister of Finance to increase provincial health budgets in light of the ARV crisis in the Free State.
Date: 11 February
Time: 11h00-13h00
Venue: Parliament House, Plein Street, Cape Town, Western Cape

For further information please contact:

- TAC General Secretary **Vuyiseka Dubula**: 082 763 3005
- TAC Chairperson **Nonkosi Khumalo**: 074 194 5911
- TAC Policy, Communication and Research Manager **Rebecca Hodes**: 079 426 8682

Source URL (retrieved on *2016/07/26 - 11:57pm*): http://tac.org.za/community/node/2483