

# Sick state of provinces' health sector

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Provincial health departments in the Eastern Cape, Free State and the Northern Cape require urgent intervention.

According to the Auditor-General, Kimi Makwetu, the financial health of the provincial departments of health and education needs it to prevent the collapse of service delivery.

Countrywide, the departments of education, health and public works continue to be a cause for concern as they have the poorest results, compared to others.

Briefing the media on the audit outcomes of the national and provincial government yesterday, Makwetu said 33% of three departments received qualified opinions, compared to only 16% of other departments.

"If you look at the total deficits of the health departments, they are sitting in total on top of R8.4 billion. So these are big risks, where the financial control systems are not strong."

His general report on the national and provincial audit outcome for the 2017-18 fiscal year also indicates there is an emerging risk of increased litigation and claims against departments.

Should departments fail to budget for claims, all successful claims will be paid from the funds earmarked for service delivery.

Makwetu's report comes just days after opposition parties in the Free State called on parliament to intervene in the state of the healthcare system in the province, stating it is on the verge of collapse.

Concerns over the state of health services in this province have also recently been highlighted by the members of the National Council of Provinces when it was revealed during their visit that the department had already paid over R21 million in medical claims this year.

The health department is facing over R1.5 billion worth of lawsuits for malpractice arising from lawsuits that date back as far as 2001. The majority of lawsuit cases are against the Universitas Academic Hospital and the Pelonomi Regional Hospital in Bloemfontein.

One of the concerns of the council regarding the health services in the Northern Cape remains the mental hospital, which has become a white elephant for over a decade with millions unaccounted for. – OFM News



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