Government has taken great strides to ensure that the most vulnerable are cushioned from the impact of Covid-19. In his presidential address on the 23 April 2020, President Ramaphosa also announced the introduction of a special relief fund for those who may find themselves in financial distress as a result of the lockdown. The department of Social Development under the leadership of Minister Zulu and SASSA have worked tirelessly to put systems in place to ensure that the management and execution of this fund will run effectively. Subsequent to that consultations with stakeholders were held and systems were developed and tested to ensure their functionality and effectiveness.

On Monday, 11 May 2020, Minister Zulu together with CEO of SASSA, Ms Busisiwe Memela launched the Special temporary COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant.

Dianne Dunkerley, Executive Manager: Grants Administration at SASSA says “the intention of this grant is to provide those without any income at all, particularly those whose ability to generate an income has been taken away as a result of the lockdown. The special grant is therefore targeted to those who were in the labour market prior to the lockdown. It is not intended to “top up” existing income”.

The qualifying criteria as they currently stand are that applicants must be:

i. South African Citizens, Permanent Residents or Refugees registered with Home Affairs;
ii. Resident within the borders of the Republic of South Africa;
iii. Above the age of 18;
iv. Unemployed;
v. Not receiving any income;
vi. Not receiving any social grant;
vii. Not receiving unemployment insurance benefit and does not qualify to receive unemployment insurance benefit;
viii. Not receiving a stipend from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme;
ix. Not receiving any other government Covid-19 response support; and
x. Not resident in a government funded or subsidised institution.

“It is important for the prospective applicants to “self-exclude” from making an application if they do not meet the qualifying criteria. For example a housewife who was not working prior to the lockdown and has a spouse who is employed, should not apply. The same with full time students who are supported by parents. No-one who is in receipt of a social grant will be considered for this special relief grant.” Dunkerley.

All Applications received will be processed. However it may take a little time to respond to the applicants, especially initially as we expect significantly high numbers of applications. Applicants are requested to submit only one application through one channel only, to avoid clogging the system with multiple applications for the same person. However, should we receive duplicate applications, we have a system which can assist to remove these and deal with only one application per citizen.

By lodging an application, applicants give consent for SASSA to validate the financial and other information against data sources held by government and financial institutions including SA Revenue Services (SARS) and Banks.

The provision of false information in an effort to qualify for the grant is an offence and will result in prosecution.

HOW TO APPLY FOR SPECIAL COVID-19 SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS GRANT?

- Applications for the special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant are only electronic. DO NOT VISIT SASSA OFFICES TO APPLY FOR THIS GRANT. If you need assistance to apply, SASSA staff and appointed volunteers can assist.
- No paper based applications will be accepted
- Applications can be received through one of the following channels:
  - WhatsApp Number: 082 046 8553
  - USSD Number: *134*7737#
  - Email: srd@sassa.gov.za
  - Call centre: 0800 60 10 11
  - Website: https://srd.sassa.gov.za

Citizens without bank accounts can also apply. In this case payment will be effected through a money transfer, once all the necessary validations have been completed.

[ paying the right social grant, to the right person, at the right time and place. NJALO! ]