

MEDIA STATEMENT

Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
Attention: Journalists and News Editors
Sunday: 10 May 2026

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CHIKUNGA CALLS FOR AN URGENT NATIONAL ACTION ON THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AFFECTING MEN.

PRETORIA: The Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Hon. Sindisiwe Chikunga, has expressed deep concern over the escalating mental health crisis affecting men and boys across South Africa, calling for urgent societal, institutional, and community-based interventions to tackle what she describes as “a silent national emergency.”

Minister Chikunga observed that many men continue to suffer in silence due to damaging social norms that discourage emotional vulnerability, help-seeking behaviour, and open discussions about mental health challenges.

“Too many men are carrying emotional pain in silence. Depression, anxiety, trauma, substance abuse, and social isolation are affecting men across all age groups, communities, and economic backgrounds. We must break the stigma that says men must suffer quietly,” said Minister Chikunga.

The Minister pointed out that economic hardship, unemployment, social pressures, family breakdown, violence, substance abuse, and unresolved trauma continue to impose enormous psychological strain on men, especially young men. These challenges are further exacerbated by limited access to mental health services, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Minister Chikunga warned that untreated mental health conditions among men have broader societal implications, including increased substance dependency, family instability, violence, crime, and suicide.

“Mental health is not a weakness. Seeking help is not a sign of failure. We need to create safe spaces where men and boys can speak openly, heal, and access support without fear of judgment,” the Minister said.

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) urges all sectors of society, including families, faith-based organisations, schools, workplaces, civil society, traditional leaders, media practitioners, and government institutions, to collaborate in promoting positive masculinity, emotional well-being, and awareness of mental health issues among men and boys.

The Minister also called on employers and educational institutions to bolster psychosocial support systems and ensure that mental health services are accessible, affordable, and inclusive. Importantly, Minister Chikunga emphasised that addressing men’s mental health must also help foster safer families and communities rooted in dignity, equality, accountability, and non-violence.

“A society that ignores the emotional well-being of men risks deepening cycles of pain, violence, and hopelessness. Healing our nation calls for caring for the mental well-being of everyone — women, men, youth, and persons with disabilities alike.”

The DWYPD remains dedicated to supporting initiatives that promote mental wellness, social cohesion, and human dignity for all South Africans.

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