

National health budget cut: What does this mean for the Western Cape?

The public health system will remain under pressure for the next three to five years as a result of significant cuts to our budget.



Source: [Pexels](#)

This was the message of Saadiq Kariem, Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness chief operating officer who reassured the province's residents that the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness is doing all that it can to mitigate these cuts to the budget.

He added that the department can now confirm the following budget details for the current 2024/25 financial year:

"When considering the department's R30.4bn budget, there is a real shortfall of R807.866m this financial year. This, in essence, means the department can offer fewer services compared to last year.

"After absorbing previous cuts to the budget, this R807m shortfall puts further additional strain on a system which is already under pressure and providing services to an increasingly uninsured population, with increasing healthcare needs," he said.

Despite this significant funding challenge, he noted the department remains committed to continuing to provide quality health services to the residents of the Western Cape.

"The department is reducing costs on the one hand, while trying to increase revenue on the other. Cost savings are expected to come from streamlining services and through innovative approaches to healthcare.

"The department is exploring a number of relationships to potentially bring additional resources into its system, to supplement government and donor-fund allocations, while we continue to advocate for additional funding."

Staffing and service levels

He added that the department is carefully considering the filling of essential posts, while keeping current staffing levels constant. Significant service cuts are unlikely, but certain services will be limited, meaning longer waiting times for some services.

"This is a deeply unfortunate and unavoidable consequence of increased demand with a restricted budget allocation."

Furthermore, clients and communities are urged to access the appropriate level of care within the healthcare system.

"Please do not visit the emergency centre with minor conditions; this increases waiting times for all our clients. There is a referral and appointment system for non-emergency cases which allows clients access to the appropriate care for their individual health needs.

"Our teams in local geographic service areas will continue to do resource planning based on the local healthcare needs of people in the areas they serve."

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