

INCLUDING ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES!!

13th October 2020

Statement by Down Syndrome South Africa on the death of Rene Deneil Andrews

On behalf of Down Syndrome South Africa, its member associations and the Down syndrome community we would like to extend our deepest condolences to the Andrews Family on the loss of their beloved daughter Rene Deneil Andrew.

Rene was admitted to the Helen Joseph Hospital on the 9th August 2020 for a lung infection and was accompanied by her father. Due to Covid-19 regulations Rene's parents were not allowed to visit the hospital but were able to communicate with the hospital staff on their daughter's wellbeing via telephone.

They were reassured that their daughter was doing well but when the family visited the Helen Joseph Hospital on the 9th October 2020, two months after her admittance they were informed that there was no one by that name at the hospital and had to return on Saturday 10th October 2020. It was only then that the family was informed of the passing of Rene on the 27th August 2020.

The hospital allegedly claims that they had made every attempt to contact the family but that the contact number that they were given was incorrect. They further alleged that they sent the SAPS to the house to inform the family but that the SAPS could not locate the family at the said address.

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members" – quote from Mahatma Gandhi. How do we as a society begin to understand and process the deaths of two adolescents with Down syndrome from the same community, namely Eldorado Park, in one month? Tragically, one incident occurred as a direct result of police brutality and the second incident occurred due to careless negligence on the part of authorities at the Helen Joseph Hospital. Compassion and kindness are the two characteristics required of persons dealing with the public and especially when persons with disabilities are involved.

We issue the following statement:

- We strongly condemn the manner in which the authorities at the Helen Joseph handled the matter in conveying the passing of Rene Andrews to her family;
- We call on the MEC of Health to launch a full inquest to ascertain the facts relating to the incident and to bring those accountable to book;
- We call that the outcomes of the investigations be made public;
- That the directives and guidelines on the admittance of patients with intellectual disabilities be amended to allow a parent/caregiver to stay with the child admitted due to their limited speech and high support needs;
- That the family of Rene receive psychosocial support;
- That the Department of Health assist Rene's family in the burial of her body.

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National Director
Down Syndrome South Africa

Our members: DSA Amathole, Free State DSA, DSA Kwa-Zulu Natal, Port Elizabeth DSA, DSA Pretoria/Tshwane, DSA Western Cape, DSA Support Cape, Intathakusa Support Group Emalahleni

Non-profit organisation 009-415/ Public Benefit Organisation 930019699