



**DIRECTOR GENERAL
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Dr FI Suliman
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Dear Dr Suliman

RE: WEARING OF HEADSCARVES ON DUTY.

Thank you for your communique dated 17 August 2023 and 12 December 2023. Your concerns on the wearing of headscarves on duty for nurses in public health establishments is noted with appreciation. In addition to relevant legal prescripts, matters of cultural and religious significance were taken into consideration in the development of the National Nursing Uniform Policy. Furthermore, the policy was widely consulted with stakeholders in the nursing field by the Department. While the Department of Health has taken cognizance that South Africa is a very diverse country in terms of cultural and religious beliefs, the following considerations led to the decision as stated in the circular.

1. The primary argument against allowing headscarves while on duty was that various religious groups use different coloured headscarves, the colours of which are just as significant as wearing the headscarf. As soon as headscarves are allowed for cultural and religious reasons, all other colour scarves would have to be allowed too. This would prevent the standardisation of uniform, which is one of the hallmarks of the policy and supports raising the image of the nurse.
2. An employer has the right to develop dress codes in places of employment. In this case, individuals are not prevented from their religious beliefs because nurses can wear headscarves from home to work and, at the end of the shift, from work to home.
3. In addition, the rights of patients in health establishments were weighed against individual and personnel rights.
4. Please find attached a copy of the National Nurses Uniform Policy including the dress code.

I hope this provides the clarity requested.

Sincerely,

**DR SSS BUTHELEZI
DIRECTOR GENERAL: HEALTH**

DATE: 31/01/2024