

A growing need for quality caregivers for the elderly amid South Africa's fourth wave

The latest population [figures](#) show that there are 5.3 million elderly people living in South Africa and at 8.7% of the total population, this is the highest ratio of elderly people on the continent.



Source: [Pexels](#)

According to UN research, this percentage will double by 2050, which indicates the need for professional and competent caregivers is only going to increase.

In dealing with the fragility and special requirements of daily elderly life, a trained caregiver is of utmost importance to ensure safety and well-being, whether at home or a retirement village. Here, Temporary Employment Service (TES) providers are instrumental in meeting the increased demand for caregivers which will, in turn, have a positive effect on unemployment numbers through job creation, while contributing to the proper care of the golden generation.

Caring for the elderly is a specialised skill set

Our Constitution and the Older Persons Act of 2006 promises that every elderly person has the right to dignity, respect and safety in addition to having their physical, emotional and social needs met. These rights form the basis of caregiver training, which makes it possible to give the elderly the care they deserve.

A crucial aspect to caregiver training is the inclusion of Covid-19 precautions, in order to safeguard elderly patients from contracting and suffering the effects of the virus. TES providers are able to provide carers with training packages to keep them informed of the latest industry happenings, PPE for protection if a patient does contract Covid-19 and strict policy and procedures when attending to a Covid-positive patient.



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As a particularly vulnerable portion of society, a properly trained and qualified caregiver is essential in caring for the elderly and providing individuals and their families with a sense of security, for the following reasons:

- * Caregivers who are skilled and adequately equipped with the knowledge and insight on elderly-specific conditions will know how to best manage these. This includes Covid-19, preventing contraction and the spread of the virus among the elderly.
- * Caregivers are able to identify and report abuse, ensuring the protection of our vulnerable seniors.
- * Care requirements are unique to each individual, depending on the person's condition or abilities, which requires specific healthcare training to meet these needs.
- * Caregivers are trained to take vital signs, prevent falls that result in injuries and hospitalisation, as well as recognise red flags which can immediately be reported if the elderly resident is in distress.

Training caregivers for the elderly

Generic caregiver courses usually span a three-month period, but adequately equipping caregivers to deal with any elderly resident always requires further training and upskilling. Certain TES providers provide free online courses, as well as regular upskilling courses, to ensure each caregiver is fully trained on the latest developments, such as those of Covid-19.

While there is currently no shortage of caregivers, the challenge lies in the quality of training caregivers receive. Partnering with a reputable TES provider addresses this shortcoming. A course that specifically addresses the needs of the elderly is necessary, and it is important to work with a TES provider that encourages caregivers to constantly improve their academic qualifications.



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Ensuring the proper level of qualified care

In order for families and care institutions to ensure that they source and place caregivers with the correct skills, they could consider outsourcing such a task to TES providers which can play a critical role in creating peace of mind for all parties involved. This is done by ensuring that caregivers are vetted and have:

- * A certified caregiver certificate accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA),
- * Completed Form 7 from the Department of Social Development,
- * A certified copy of their ID,
- * personal medical-malpractice cover, and
- * criminal clearance.

Positive contribution to the economy

Reputable TES providers require candidates to have police clearance before they place them. The right TES partner has strict checks and screening processes in play to ensure that the candidate is properly qualified and adequately suited for the relevant placement. In addition to handling the recruitment side of meeting the demand for caregivers, TES providers also ensure that the working conditions and relationship is labour-law compliant, while monitoring services provided along with staff performance.

TES providers ensure the provision of regular upskilling courses or “on the spot” training, should a staff member require it, in order to deal with medical developments such as the Covid-19 pandemic. In this way, involved parties can ensure that their senior citizens get the quality of care and dignity they deserve.

Not only does this contribute positively to the economy directly through job creation for caregivers, it also has an indirect positive benefit in that family members can be relieved of their burden of care. This enables them to fully participate in the economic activities through which they earn their living.

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