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MEDIA RELEASE

ICASA defers the implementation of the new service code for Child Helpline Services

15 January 2021

Pretoria – The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA/the Authority) wishes to inform all stakeholders and licensees that the termination date of the current Child Helpline Service Hotline **(0800 05 55 55)** has been postponed from the initial 15 January 2021 to 15 March 2021.

The current Child Helpline will be replaced by the new service code **116** following the termination. All licensees are therefore required to continue routing traffic to the existing number 0800 05 55 55 for Child Helpline Service in the interim.

The delay in the implementation of the new service code has been attributed mainly to the recent spike in the COVID-19 infections and the subsequent risk adjusted strategy to level 3 lockdown. This has had an impact on the public awareness relating to the imminent change in the Child Helpline service code.

Commenting on the introduction of new service code, the Chairperson of ICASA, Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng said that this is one of the resolutions taken by the International Telecommunication Union in 2009 where regulators were encouraged to consider available mechanisms that may assist to arrive at a globally harmonised national short code for child helpline services.

In March 2019, ICASA published its intention to amend Regulation 17 of the Numbering Plan Regulations of 2016 to give effect to the implementation of the short code 116 for the provision of Child Helpline services.

The Authority will, in due course, publish a formal Notice regarding the extension of the termination date of the current toll-free number for Child Helpline services in the Government Gazette.

Ends...

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