

# Hundreds of jobs for the deaf thanks to joint venture

More than 400 deaf and hearing-impaired people nationwide have found an opportunity for gainful employment within the Shoprite Group, thanks to the retailer's Decade of the Deaf Project in partnership with Employ and Empower Deaf (eDeaf) over the past six years. The aim is to provide jobs for 1,000 deaf learners within a 10-year period.



The Shoprite Group, in partnership with eDeaf and the Wholesale and Retail SETA, started this initiative in 2009 by recruiting, training and placing deaf employees in Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets throughout Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, with recruitment expanding to the Eastern Cape most recently. The wholesale and retail industry is perfectly suited for deaf candidates in all areas from receiving and merchandising to work as deli assistants and cashiers.

## Skills programmes

Deaf candidates are taught 13 different skills programmes as part of a one-year learnership in a National Certificate: Wholesale and Retail Operations National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 2. The Shoprite Group was the first long-term invested employer in the retail sector to offer this qualification to disabled (deaf and hearing impaired) learners and those who qualify are guaranteed employment within the group following a competency evaluation. Training is conducted by a specialised team of deaf facilitators and learners are taught in South African sign language.

"September is International Month for Deaf People. We at eDeaf and the Deaf community at large, thank the group for joining hands with us and affording the opportunity to these candidates to grow and build a career in retail," said eDeaf's Executive Member, Nazereen Bhana.

The group also has a coaching capacity-building programme in which deaf employees from previous intakes are trained to coach the new intake of deaf learners and all stores are sensitised in communicating with deaf staff members.

The Shoprite Group acknowledges that working in a busy retail environment, serving mostly hearing customers, is a challenging task and it is proud to be associated with an initiative aimed at empowering a disadvantaged part of society.

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