

# CENTRAL GUIDELINES FOR CRÈCHES AT WORKPLACES

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The Centre has prepared guidelines for setting up of crèches at workplaces, which prescribe trained personnel to man the facility as well as infrastructure requirements and safety norms.

In March this year, Parliament passed the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017, enhancing paid maternity leave from a period of 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The law is applicable to all institutions with 10 or more employees. It also makes it mandatory for every organisation with 50 or more employees to have a crèche.

The guidelines made public last month recommend that a crèche be either at the workplace or within 500 metres of it. Alternatively, it could also be in the beneficiaries' neighbourhood.

The facility should be open for eight to 10 hours and if the employees have a shift system, then the crèche should also be run accordingly. A crèche must have a minimum space of 10 to 12 square feet per child to ensure that she or he can play, rest and learn. There should be no unsafe places such as open drains, pits, garbage bins near the centre.

The crèches should have at least one guard, who should have undergone police verification. There should also be at least one supervisor per crèche and a trained worker for every 10 children under three years of age or for every 20 children above the age of three, along with a helper.

The government has also recommended that no outsiders such as plumbers, drivers, electricians be allowed inside the crèche when children are present.

A crèche monitoring committee with representations from among crèche workers, parents and administration should be formed. There should also be a grievance redressal committee for inquiring into instances of sexual abuse. The guidelines are not mandatory but are a yardstick for NGOs and organisations for setting up of creches.

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