

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ALLIED AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS BILL, 2020

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

- The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2020 was introduced in Rajya Sabha by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, on September 15, 2020. The Bill seeks to regulate and standardise the education and practice of allied and healthcare professionals. Key features of the Bill include:
- **Allied health professional: The Bill defines ‘allied health professional’ as an associate, technician, or technologist trained to support the diagnosis and treatment of any illness, disease, injury, or impairment. Such a professional should have obtained a diploma or degree under this Bill. The duration of the degree /diploma should be at least 2,000 hours (over a period of two to four years).**
- **Healthcare professional: A ‘healthcare professional’ includes a scientist, therapist, or any other professional who studies, advises, researches, supervises, or provides preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic, or promotional health services. Such a professional should have obtained a degree under this Bill. The duration of the degree should be at least 3,600 hours (over a period of three to six years).**
- **Allied and healthcare professions: The Bill specifies certain categories of allied and healthcare professions as recognised categories. These are mentioned in the Schedule to the Bill and include life science professionals, trauma and burn care professionals, surgical and anaesthesia related technology professionals, physiotherapists, and nutrition science professionals. The central government may amend this Schedule after consultation with the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Profession.**
- **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions: The Bill sets up the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions. The Commission will consist of: (i) the Chairperson, (ii) Vice-Chairperson, (iii) five members (at the level of Joint Secretary) representing various Departments/ Ministries of the central government, (iv) one representative from the Directorate General of Health Services, (v) three Deputy Directors or Medical Superintendents appointed on a rotational basis from amongst medical institutions including the AIIMS, Delhi and AIIPMR, Mumbai, and (vi) 12 part-time members representing State Councils, among others.**
- **Functions of the Commission: The Commission will perform the following functions with regard to Allied and Healthcare professionals: (i) framing policies and standards for regulating education and practice, (ii) creating and maintaining an online Central Register of all registered professionals, (iii) providing basic standards of education, courses, curriculum, staff qualifications, examination, training, maximum fee payable for various categories, and (iv) providing for a uniform entrance and exit examination, among others.**

- **Professional Councils:** The Commission will constitute a Professional Council for every recognised category of allied and healthcare professions. The Professional Council will consist of a president and four to 24 members, representing each profession in the recognised category. The Commission may delegate any of its functions to this Council.
- **State Councils:** Within six months from the passage of the Bill, state governments will constitute State Allied and Healthcare Councils. The State Councils will consist of: (i) the Chairperson (at least 25 years of experience in the field of allied and healthcare science), (ii) one member representing medical sciences in the state government, (iii) two members representing state medical colleges, (iv) two members representing charitable institutions, and (v) two members from each of the recognised categories of allied and healthcare professions, nominated by the state government, among others. The State Councils will: (i) enforce professional conduct and code of ethics to be observed by allied healthcare professionals, (ii) maintain respective State Registers, (iii) inspect allied and healthcare institutions, and (iv) ensure uniform entry and exit examinations.
- **Establishment of institutions:** Prior permission of the State Council will be required to: (i) establish a new institution, or (ii) open new courses, increase the admission capacity, or admit a new batch of students to existing institutions. If such permission is not sought, then any qualification granted to a student from such an institution will not be recognised under the Bill.
- **Offences and penalties:** No person is allowed to practice as a qualified allied and healthcare practitioner other than those enrolled in a State Register or the National Register. Any person who contravenes this provision will be punished with a fine of Rs 50,000.

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