

DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATES, SAY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Persons with Disability including Mentally Ill People - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

Nearly three years after the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 was passed, and over a year since the State notified rules, persons with some of the disabilities added to the Act are still facing difficulties in getting disability certificates.

Activists and persons with disabilities say they have to run from pillar to post to try and obtain certificates, and there is no standard assessment followed. Disability certificates are required to avail State schemes, including transport concessions and disability pension.

Parvirthan, an organisation working with people with Parkinson's disease, has been contacting place after place to try and get certificates, said Sudha Meiyappan, founder of the organisation.

'No clarity'

A member said he was told at the State Resource-cum-Training Centre (SRTC) in Chennai to go to the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), Muttukadu, for a medical assessment, to obtain the certificate. "But NIEPMD is far, and difficult for me to travel to. We asked if any city hospital could do the medical assessment, but the SRTC had no clarity on this," said the 77-year-old.

Even a NIEPMD medical assessment certificate, however, did not work for a resident of Coimbatore, who has multiple sclerosis. "I went with the NIEPMD certificate to the district disabled welfare office and they refused to accept it," she said. This, despite the fact that Tamil Nadu's rules state that institutions run by the Central government are medical authorities for certification.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) and Parkinson's are some of the disabilities added under the RPWD Act, which now lists 21 disabilities (from the 7 under the earlier Act). In January 2018, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment brought out a set of guidelines for the evaluation of the newly added disabilities, but these are not being followed, said Smitha Sadasivan of the Disability Rights Alliance, Tamil Nadu.

The entire procedure is unclear, said Ann Gonsalvez of the the Multiple Sclerosis Society of India, Chennai chapter.

"Persons with disabilities that are newly added are finding it very difficult. There is no awareness even among government officials about the guidelines. We have represented this to the government," said disability rights activist S. Namburajan. Director for the Welfare of Differently Abled Johny Tom Varghese however said certificates for many of the newly added disabilities had been issued. Special camps would also be conducted with associations of specified disabilities and more awareness and sensitisation programmes will be conducted for specialists in the medical boards, he said.

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