

Measures to be taken for Care and protection of children affected due to COVID-19

Children are the future of the country and need special care which goes beyond merely offering monetary support. Need and resource mapping along with careful planning should be done to foster access to resources needed for their individual needs. All concerned Government departments and other stakeholders at all levels must be activated to guarantee convergent efforts in the best interest of the child in distress. It may be ensured that none of the vulnerable children slip through the safety net.

Role of State Government

1. Identification and Profiling of children

- a. Identify children in distress — through outreach, survey etc.,
- b. Create a database with profile of each child along with the details of their specific needs and requirements. The data of children should be kept secure by the authorities and confidentiality about their identities should be maintained, as prescribed under the JJ Act, 2015.
- c. Ensure that the data of every child is uploaded on Track Child Portal of Government of India.

2. Vigilance and Protection

- a. Publicize contact details of Child Welfare Committees and Childline (1098) at hospital receptions and other prominent places.
- b. Police to be alerted to track and monitor the evolving situation carefully, to prevent crimes against children including Child labour, Child marriage, trafficking and illegal adoptions.
- c. Database of children at risk to be maintained to ensure follow-up and regular monitoring.
- d. Suitable measures to be put in place to ensure that financial assistance offered to children is not adjusted against pending loans / other liabilities of their parents.

3. Emergency Care and Rehabilitation

- a. Directions may be given to Hospitals to collect contact details of trustworthy person of patients in Hospital admission form, to be contacted for taking care of children in case of any eventuality.
- b. Immediate temporary rehabilitation of children through the existing child care facilities supported under Child Protection Services scheme must be ensured.
- c. Adequate provisions for pediatric and neo-natal care may be ensured in every district.

4. Institutional support through Child Care Institutions (CCIs)

- a. To organise special inspection drives in collaboration with District Magistrates, for assessment of quality care in all Child Care Institutions (supported by Government or managed by other Institutions) & for ascertaining the wellbeing of children living there
- b. All CCIs should be directed to ensure proper facilities such as clean & hygienic living conditions, basic amenities, quality food and safety for all children.
- c. Suitable arrangements for isolation facilities shall be put in place within CCIs to take care of children suffering from COVID.
- d. Prepare a roster of Child Psychologists or Counselors to visit CCIs and interact with children.
- e. Launch a local helpline manned by experts for psychosocial care/support to children in distress.

5. Role of District Magistrate and District Administration Guardianship

- a. District Magistrate shall be the Guardian of vulnerable children impacted adversely by COVID.
- b. The DM shall make efforts that such children are rehabilitated in the following order of preference, in the manner as prescribed under the JJ Act, 2015

1. Restored to/rehabilitated with extended family, Kith and kin of the Child
 2. Adoption (in case children are found legally free for adoption by Child Welfare Committee) through CARINGS portal maintained by Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)
 3. Under Government approved Child Care Institutions
- c. Create a district level multi-departmental taskforce to *map* the needs, monitor progress and ensure that all benefits reach affected children.
 - d. All Civil Society Organisations may be asked to positively inform Child Welfare Committee or District Child protection Unit about any vulnerable child noticed by them in the District.
 - e. District Magistrates need to secure the rights of the children on family assets/ ancestral properties, to ensure that it is not sold or encroached. It should be done through proper oversight maintained by Registration/ Revenue Department

6. Institutional Support through CCIs

- a. Temporarily allocate Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to house children whose parents have been unwell due to COVID and provide necessary support to them, in case extended family is not available to take care of them.
- b. Regular monitoring of CCIs in the district through a team of officials to ensure proper rehabilitation/restoration of children takes place at the earliest.

7. Police

- a. District Police team to stay alert and vigilant to prevent trafficking of children, illegal adoption, child marriage, child labour or any other kind of abuse.
- b. All cases of children offered for adoption on social media to be traced and action may be taken against the perpetrator if found guilty.
- c. Vigil may be kept on CCIs and vulnerable hot spots in the district, housing children at risk, during the Police beats/ Night rounds in Urban and Rural areas.

8. Panchayat Raj Institutions/ Urban local bodies

- a. The child protection committees at Panchayat level to identify and inform District Administration/ District Child protection Unit about children in distress.
- b. District Magistrates to organise orientation and sensitization of Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions, and inform them regarding measures being taken and schemes announced for such children.

9. Education

- a. Ensure that all the orphan children are provided free education through government Day schools / or residential schools.
- b. Based on specific need of the child, he / she can also be enrolled in the nearest private schools under Section RTE section 12(1)(c).
- c. Efforts may be made to include eligible orphan children under existing scholarship schemes of Central/State Governments.
- d. Vocational training, wherever required, may be provided under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKW).

10. Medical facilities

- a. Health Insurance may be secured for eligible children under PM Jan Arogya Yojana scheme of Government of India, as per the scheme guidelines.