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## **SCHEME FOR PARA-LEGAL VOLUNTEERS (REVISED)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the year 2009 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) brought out a scheme called the Para-Legal Volunteers Scheme which aimed at imparting legal training to volunteers selected from different walks of life so as to ensure legal aid reaching all sections of people through the process of Para-Legal Volunteers Scheme; ultimately removing the barriers into access to justice. The Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) are expected to act as intermediaries bridging the gap between the common people and the Legal Services Institutions to remove impediments in access to justice. Ultimately, the process aims at Legal Services Institutions reaching out to the people at their doorsteps rather than people approaching such Legal Services Institutions.

The western concept of 'Paralegals' cannot be totally adopted to Indian conditions having regard to illiteracy of large sections of the community: The hours of training as applicable to a regular academic course, cannot be adopted. It should be more like a bridge course conceptualized in a simple and need-based module. The PLVs have to be trained in the basics of different Laws which would be applicable at the grass root level with reference to their day-to-day life, the subtle nuances employed in the working of a judicial system, and the functioning of various other stakeholders like the Police, officials from Social Welfare Department, Woman and Child Welfare Department and other departments dealing with different beneficial schemes of Central and State Governments including the protection officers involved with Domestic Violence and Juvenile Justice Acts.

With the basic knowledge in the laws and other available welfare measures and legislation, they would be able to assist their immediate neighbourhood; Those who are in need of such assistance, so that a person, who is not aware of such right is not only made to understand his rights, but also will be able to have access to measures involving implementation of such rights.

PLVs are not only expected to impart awareness on laws and the legal system, but they must also be trained to counsel and amicably settle simple disputes between the parties at the source itself; which could save the trouble of the affected travelling all the way to the Legal Services Authority/ADR Centres. If the dispute is of such a nature, which cannot be resolved at the source with the assistance of PLVs, they could bring such parties to the ADR Centres, where, with the assistance of the Secretary in charge either it could be referred to LokAdalat or Mediation Centre or Legal assistance could be provided for adjudication in a court of law; depending upon the nature of problem.

Though initially the NALSA Scheme of training of the PLVs included the legal fraternity of Advocates, Advocate community, later on experience revealed, the same to be unfeasible on account of conflict with the professional status of Advocates. The reality that marginalised people living in distant places will not have the benefit of lawyer PLVs also contributed to the practice being discontinued, and NALSA deciding that Advocates shall not be enlisted or engaged as PLVs.

The past experience gained from the working of the system after 2009 and also ground realities ascertained from the paralegals in the respective jurisdiction showed us that there has to be a re-look into the entire matter and who best could fit the role of a Para-Legal Volunteer. Initially, the training programme of PLVs was only for two-three days. Since the obligations of PLVs were vast in nature, it was felt, there has to be longer duration of training provided to the PLVs. At the same time, the training curriculum for PLVs adopted by NALSA cannot be such as to be training PLVs to become full-fledged lawyers. PLVs are not expected to conduct themselves as legal professionals. The aim of the training should concentrate on basic human qualities like compassion, empathy and a genuine concern and willingness to extend voluntary service without expectation of monetary gain from it. Then the line separating PLVs from professional lawyers should be zealously guarded.

### **MODALITIES**

- Ideally every Taluk Legal Services Committee (TLSC) shall have a panel of PLVs of a maximum number of 25 (50) on their roll at any given point of time. The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) shall have 50 (100) active PLVs on their roll.
- PLVs shall be literate, preferably matriculate, with a capacity for overall comprehension.
- Preferably PLVs shall be selected from persons, who do not look up to the income they derive from their services as PLVs, but they should have a mind-set to assist the needy in the society coupled with the compassion, empathy and concern for the upliftment of marginalised and weaker sections of the society. They must have unflinching commitment towards the cause which should be translated into the work they undertake.

### **GROUPS from whom Para-Legal Volunteers can be selected**

- Teachers (including retired teachers)
- Retired Government servants and senior citizens.
- M.S.W students and teachers.
- Anganwadi Workers.
- Doctors/Physicians.
- Students & Law Students (till they enroll as lawyers).
- Members of non-political, service oriented NGOs and Clubs.
- Members of Women Neighbourhood Groups, MaithriSanghams and other Self Help Groups including of marginalized/vulnerable groups.
- Educated prisoners with good behaviour, serving long term sentences in prisons.
- Any other person whom the District Legal Services Authority or Taluk Legal Services Committee deems fit to be identified as PLVs.

### **Selection of PLVs - District Level**

Selecting the PLVs shall be by a Committee chaired by the Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority. The Secretary shall be one of the Members of the Committee. The Committee shall consist in all of three members including the Chairman and the Secretary shall be one of the Members of the Committee. The third member, to be appointed at the discretion of the Chairman of the DLSA, shall be one capable of identifying suitable persons, who could be trained as PLVs. This selection process shall not be entrusted to any other body.

### **Selection of PLVs - Taluk Level**

The Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority shall constitute a Committee consisting of the Chairman of DLSA, Member Secretary of DLSA and the Chairman of TLSC and a fourth person at the

discretion of the Chairman of DLSA. The place of interview for Taluk Level PLVs shall be at the discretion of the Chairman of DLSA. The Member Secretary of DLSA shall co-ordinate with the selection process.

### **Empanelment process**

Applications may be invited from the local residents by the respective DLSAs and TLSCs or Sub Divisional Legal Services Committee. There could be an advertisement, if required. Copies of either the advertisement or notice calling for applications could be sent to the offices of the Bar Association, Notice Board of the Court premises, Legal Services Authority Offices and District Panchayat Offices. The advertisement shall state the qualifications required for selection as PLVs as stated above with last date for the receipt of applications at the office of DLSA. There shall be a column in the application, wherein the candidate has to express willingness or place of preference to work at either district-level or taluk-level or village-level. In the advertisement there shall be clear mentioning that the work of PLVs does not carry any salary, remuneration or wages except honorarium fixed by the DLSA from time to time.

### **Method of Selection**

The Selection Committee is entitled to use its discretion and shortlist the number of candidates for interview depending upon the number of applications received. Preference shall be given to women while selecting PLVs. Representation from suitable applicants belonging to SC/ST, minority and other backward classes must be ensured.

### **Training of PLVs**

Under the supervision of Chairman of DLSA, PLVs shall undergo training programme, totally under the control of the Member Secretary. The training shall be held at a convenient place subject to discretion of the Chairman of DLSA. The number of PLVs to be trained at any given point of time in a training programme shall not exceed 50. Wherever the State Judicial Academy has facilities for training, the same may be availed of. The expenses for the training shall be incurred by the Judicial Academy for providing such facility to be reimbursed by the State Government/DLSA concerned.

### **Trainers/Resource Persons**

- In consultation with the State Legal Services Authority, the Chairman of DLSA shall identify the trainers for training the PLVs and other resource persons.
- Suitable persons from the members of the Bar with training skills shall be included in the list of resource persons.
- Others could include:
  - NGOs associated with the activities of Legal Services Authority, i.e., persons, who are exposed to the nature of work of the Legal Services Authority.
  - Master Trainers of mediation.
  - Law Teachers from Law Colleges.
  - Post-Graduate students of Law.
  - Retired Professors of Law.
  - Retired Judicial Officers.
  - Revenue Officers.
  - Officers from Social Welfare Department,.
  - Public Prosecutors.
  - Police Officers.
  - Psychiatrists/Psychologists/Mental Health experts.

### **Nature of Training**

Training that is to be provided to the PLVs would be in accordance with the curriculum prescribed by the NALSA and will be in the following formant:

- (a) Orientation Programme.
- (b) Basic training.
- (c) Refresher course.

There shall be periodical refresher training in order to assess the quality of work turned out by the PLVs. The Legal Services Authorities need to assess the work of PLVs and assist them to identify the deficits and how to tackle the problems faced by the PLVs after their experience in the field. There shall be annual congregation of PLVs so as to facilitate an exchange of experience. There shall be district-wise half-yearly meetings of PLVs to resolve their doubts and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and upgradation of their skills as per the module.

PLVs shall create awareness among citizens of the benefits of settlement of pending cases through LokAdalats including the fact that the parties are entitled to refund of court fee and that there shall be no appeal.

### **Topics for Training**

A uniform training module for PLVs shall be prepared by NALSA which shall be applicable to the entire country and the module shall have a special emphasis on the conduct and behaviour of PLVs. The module so prepared shall be translated into regional languages.

### **Identity Cards**

After completion of the training by the District Legal Services Authority, the PLVs may be subjected to a written and oral test before the PLVs are declared to have successfully completed the training. On being declared successful, they may be given identity cards bearing the emblem of the District Legal Services Authority. The identity card shall have (i) serial number;(ii) name and address of the PLV; (iii) contact number of the PLV; (iv) photograph of the PLV; (v) the date of issue and the period of validity of the identity card. It shall be clearly printed on the reverse side of the identity card that the loss of the identity card should be reported to the nearest Police Station as also its recovery.

The identity card shall not be used for availing of travelling concession either in bus or in any mode of transport. It shall not be used for availing of any governmental benefits or loan by the holder of the card. The identity card shall not be used for availing of any other facilities, except for the purpose of identification of the person as PLV.

### **Validity of Identity Cards**

The validity of the identity card shall be for a period of one year. A new card shall be issued to the PLV, if the Chairman, District Legal Services Authority finds him/her eligible to continue as PLVs for more than one year.

### **Mentors for PLVs**

DLSA and TLSC shall maintain a panel of Mentors/Guides whom the PLVs could contact in case of any clarification or assistance in connection with the discharge of their duties as PLVs. There shall not be more than ten PLVs for one Mentor.

### **Monthly Reports**

A monthly report of the existing PLVs, PLVs newly recruited and the training given to the PLVs shall be submitted by the DLSA to the SLSA. The SLSA shall submit a consolidated report of the details of the

number of PLVs trained, the resource persons engaged, expenses incurred and the refresher courses, if any, organized, pertaining to each month, to the National Legal Services Authority before 15th day of every month.

NALSA shall cause the copies of such reports sent to the National Committee for Para-Legal Training and Legal Aid Activities set-up by the Chief Justice of India. The SLSAs shall submit to the NALSA a consolidated District-wise report on the activities of the PLVs, specifically the number of persons attended and the nature of advice given and action taken.

### **Duties of Trained Para-Legal Volunteers**

Para-Legal Volunteer shall educate people, especially those belonging to weaker sections of the society, to enable them to be aware of their right to live with human dignity, to enjoy all the constitutionally and statutorily guaranteed rights as also the duties and discharge of obligations as per law.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall make people aware of the nature of their disputes/ issues/ problems and inform them that they can approach the TLSC/ DLSA/ HCLSC/ SLSA/ SCLSC so as to resolve the dispute/issue/problems through these institutions.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall constantly keep a watch on transgressions of law or acts of injustice in their area of operation and bring them immediately to the notice of the TLSC through telephonic message or a written communication or in person to enable effective remedial action by the Committee.

When the PLV receives information about the arrest of a person in the locality, the PLV shall visit the Police Station and ensure that the arrested person gets legal assistance, if necessary, through the nearest legal services institutions.

The PLVs shall also ensure that the victims of crime also get proper care and attention. Efforts shall be made by the PLVs to secure compensation for the victims of crime under the provisions of Section 357-A Cr.P.C.

PLVs shall, with proper authorization from the DLSA / TLSC visit jails, lock-ups, psychiatric hospitals, children's homes/observation homes and shall ascertain the legal service needs of the inmates and intimate the authorities concerned about any absence noticed of basic essential necessities with special emphasis on hygiene.

PLVs shall report violations of child rights, child labour, missing children and trafficking of girl children to the nearest legal services institutions or to the child welfare committee.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall assist the DLSA/TLSC for organizing legal awareness camps in their area of operation.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall give information to the people of their locality about the legal services activities of SLSA/DLSA/TLSC/HCLSC/SCLSC and shall provide their addresses to the people so as to enable them to utilize the free services rendered by the above organizations to the eligible persons.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall generate awareness amongst people about the benefits of settlement of disputes including pre-litigation stage through LokAdalats, Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall make people aware of the benefits of inexpensive settlement of disputes relating to Public Utility Services like P&T, Telephones, Electricity, Water Supply, Insurance and hospital services through Permanent LokAdalat (PLA).

Para-Legal Volunteers shall submit monthly reports of their activities to the DLSA / TLSC under whom they are working in the prescribed format.

A diary to record the daily activities shall be maintained by each PLVs. The diary shall be printed and given to PLVs by the District Legal Services Authority. Such diary shall be verified and endorsed by the Secretary, DLSA or the Chairman, TLSC as the case may be.

Para-Legal Volunteers shall see that publicity material on legal services activities are exhibited at prominent places in their area of activity.

### **Expenses incurred by Para-Legal Volunteers**

Reasonable expenses incurred by Para-Legal Volunteers e.g Bus/Train fare, Postage, Telephone charges etc., may be reimbursed by the TLSC/DLSA/SLSA, on production of proof. Travel expenses limited to the lowest classes by road/rail/steamer to the legal aid beneficiaries brought by the Para-Legal Volunteers also may be reimbursed at the discretion of the Chairman.

The rate of daily honorarium payable to PLVs on the days of their engagement as such in metro-cities may be determined by the SLSA.

The PLVs are not entitled to any travel expenses when they use the transport provided by SLSA/DLSA/TLSC.

### **Para-Legal Volunteers to work in the 'Front Offices' of the DLSA/TLSCs.**

The Secretary, DLSA or TLSC may depute one or more PLVs to operate the 'front offices' of the legal services institutions.

### **Para-Legal Volunteers to work in the 'Legal Aid Clinics' of the DLSA/TLSCs.**

The Secretary, DLSA or TLSC may depute PLVs in the Legal Aid Clinics set up under the National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Regulations, 2011. The PLVs engaged in the Legal Aid Clinics shall function in such clinics in accordance with the provisions of the aforesaid regulations.

### **Honorarium for the PLVs rendering services in the Legal Aid Clinics and Front Offices.**

The State Legal Services Authority in consultation with the National Legal Services Authority may fix an honorarium for the PLVs engaged in the legal aid clinics.

However, such honorarium for those who have rendered services on any day shall not be less than Rs.250/- per day.

The PLVs who bring legal aid applicants from the distant villages to the legal services institutions at the Taluk/District level and to the District ADR Centers shall also be eligible to receive honorarium for such day at the same rate.

PLVs shall also be eligible for honorarium if on any particular day they assist persons in connection with the PLV work by accompanying such persons to various offices including Courts, however, subject to proof.

### **Para-Legal Volunteers to assist in the legal literacy classes and camps.**

The PLVs in consultation with the nearest legal services institutions shall organise micro-legal literacy camps in the area of their operation by organising legal literacy classes for small groups of persons including labourers, women, children members of SC/ST etc. It shall be the duty of the PLVs to distribute information booklets and other publications of the Legal Services Authorities during the legal literacy classes.

### **Resolving local disputes through ADR mechanism.**

The PLVs shall take efforts to bring the parties of the locality involved in disputes, to settlement, by using the machinery of LokAdalat, Mediation or Conciliation at the District ADR Centers. If no District ADR Center has been set up in the District, the legal services institutions shall take steps for organising a suitable ADR mechanism like LokAdalat, mediation, conciliation etc. in the village itself in coordination with the PLVs. The PLVs who bring such cases to the ADR process shall be entitled to receive the prescribed honorarium on the day when such proceedings are held.

### **Para-Legal Volunteers in Jails.**

A few educated well-behaved prisoners serving long term sentences in the Central Prison and District Prisons may be identified for being trained as Para Legal Volunteers. Their services shall be available to the other prisoners in the jail including the under trial prisoners. The training of such PLVs may be conducted along with the other PLVs.

### **Payment.**

They will be entitled to be paid as PLVs for the services rendered at the prescribed rate of honorarium payable to other PLVs.

### **Disqualifications of Para-Legal Volunteers and their removal.**

- The PLVs shall be disqualified and removed from the panel if he/she:
- Fails to evince interest in the Scheme.
- Has been adjudged insolvent.
- Has been accused of an offence.
- Has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as PLVs.
- Has so abused his/her position or misconducted in any manner as to render his/her continuance prejudicial to the public interest.
- If she/he is an active political enthusiast of a political party. Any such Para-Legal Volunteer may be removed by the Chairman, District Legal Services Authority after suitable enquiry and intimation of the same should be sent to the State Legal Services Authority.

### **National level meetings of Para-Legal Volunteers.**

The State Legal Services Authority may select suitable PLVs for attending the National Level programmes relating to PLVs to be organised by the National Legal Services Authority as the case may be. The State

Legal Services Authority may recommend the names of PLVs who have given outstanding service for considering such PLVs for National awards to be instituted by the National Legal Services Authority.

**The District Legal Services Authority to maintain a database of all Para-Legal Volunteers in the District.**

The District Legal Services Authority shall maintain a directory of Para-Legal Volunteers and the same shall be updated periodically. The directory shall contain the details of the para-legal volunteers of District Authority and Taluk/Mandal/Sub-divisional Committees, their names, addresses, telephone/cell phone number, e-mail ID (if any), number and date of expiry of the identity card issued.

**The State Legal Services Authority to maintain a database of all Para-Legal Volunteers in the State.**

The State Legal Services Authority shall maintain a directory of Para-Legal Volunteers and the same shall be updated periodically. The directory shall contain the district wise details of the names of para-legal volunteers, their addresses, telephone/cell phone numbers, e-mail ID (if any), number and date of expiry of the identity card issued.

The Legal Services Authorities to work in co-ordination with the National Committee for Para-Legal Training and Legal Aid Activities set up by the Chief Justice of India.

The State, District and Taluk level legal services institutions shall work in coordination with the National Committee for Para-Legal Training and Legal Aid Activities set up by the Chief Justice of India. The directions, if any, given by the Hon'ble Chairman of the National Committee for Para-Legal Training and Legal Aid Activities shall be binding on all legal services institutions in the country.

**MODULE FOR THE ORIENTATION - INDUCTION - REFRESHER COURSES FOR PLV TRAINING**

**I. ORIENTATION COURSE**

Immediately upon initial empanelment the PLVs shall be given a day's orientation course.

**Course objectives:**

The objective of the Orientation Programme is to provide an overview of the role of the PLVs and lay down the Code of Ethics that they will be required to be adhered to.

The Orientation Programme should include inter alia the following:

- Introductions and Ice-Breaking Session
- Purpose & Role of PLVs.
- Basic Structure of the Constitution - Preamble etc.
- Obligations of the State under the Constitution to the marginalised classes of society (Directive Principles of State Policy)
- Fundamental Rights (including Articles 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 22)
- Duties of a responsible citizen to the community (Fundamental Duties).
- Article 39 A and Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and NALSA Regulations.
- Do's and Don'ts for PLVs.
- Dress Code and Standards of behaviour.
- Materials



- Ethics.

## **II INDUCTION COURSE**

The induction training will be for a period of four days and should cover the following topics:

- Basic listening, communication, observation skills and Drafting skills.
- Family Laws (Marriage Laws, Adoption, Maintenance, Custody and Guardianship, Judicial separation & Divorce).
- Property Laws (Inheritance, Transfers of immovable property, Registration, Revenue Laws).
- Criminal Laws (IPC & Cr.P.C {minimum required knowledge, especially, bail, arrest etc. S.357 Cr.P.C., Rights of Prisoners under Jail Manual and Prisoner's Act etc}).
- Labour Laws (Minimum Wages Act 1948, Workmen's Compensation Act 1923, Unorganised Workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2008, The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (Briefly), legal assistance under the NALSA Scheme (Legal Services to the Workers in the Unorganised Sector) Scheme, 2010.
- Gender Centric Laws/Women Laws - Equal Remuneration Act 1976, Maternity Benefit Act 1961, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971, Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994, Sexual Harassment at Workplace, Important provisions of IPC - Sections 509, 354, 376, 304B, 366, 498A, 494, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- Laws relating to children - Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986, Missing Children, The Factories Act 1948, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.
- SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.
- Government orders and schemes promoting social welfare, including MNREGA, Social Security Schemes (pensions, antodaya, insurance etc), obtaining various certificates (such as caste, disability, birth, income etc), obtaining ration card, Aadhar card, National Population Register, Voter ID-card, etc, obtaining Passport.
- Visits to Govt. Offices, Courts, Police Stations, Prisons, Revenue Offices, DLSAs, TLSCs etc. Interaction with Protection Officers, CWCs/JJBs, appropriate authority under PCPNDT Act, 1994 etc.

## **III ADVANCE TRAINING**

After the PLVs have had field experience for three months it is important that an advanced training programme is conducted lasting for three days. The occasion should be utilized by the Chairpersons of the DLSAs to discuss the work done by the PLVs, the shortcomings generally noticed and their continuance. The Mentors should also participate in this programme for guiding the PLVs to resolve the problems faced by the PLVs in the discharge of their duties and public interaction. The Chairpersons of the DLSAs should also obtain feedback from the PLVs in order to remove administrative bottlenecks. During this training programme the PLVs should be introduced to special laws which could include:

- Right to Information Act, 2005

- Motor Vehicles Act, 1988
- Mental Health Act, 1987 and legal assistance under the NALSA scheme Legal Services to the mentally ill Persons and Persons with Mental Disabilities) Scheme, 2010.
- Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.
- Right to Education Act, 2009
- Alternate Dispute Resolution (S 89 C.P.C.)
- Basic skills in mediation and counselling
- Lok Adalat, including pre-litigation and its benefits.
- Plea-bargaining
- Rights of marginalised groups such as those living with HIV/AIDS, Disabled, trans genders etc.
- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and issues relating to sex workers.
- Disaster Management and Legal assistance to victims of disaster under the NALSA Scheme - Legal Services to Disaster Victims through Legal Services Authorities.
- Environmental issues
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Ideally, the SLSAs should by itself or through the DLSAs organize workshops at regular intervals on special topics which could be for a day or two. These should be need based, that is to say, if on a review of the working of the PLVs, the SLSAs/DLSAs feel that certain subjects need to be revisited and discussed again or that in a given area certain issues exist which need to be addressed or tackled and which have not been dealt with by the prescribed course content, such topics and issues should be discussed in the one day/two days workshops.

Inter-District workshops should be organised by the SLSAs for a day to encourage experience sharing and introduction of better practices. Good work done could be recognised and appreciated and commendation certificates given on the occasion.