

Aug 23, 2010

Elderly seek NGO help to draft will, keep kin in the dark

NEW DELHI: Kul Bhushan Khanna (name changed) is 85 years old and he faces a dilemma. He wants to make a will. But fearing that his will might disappoint some of his family members and cause bitterness amongst them, Khanna has put his plans on hold.

Anticipating a similar situation in their homes, many elderly are seeking help to write their will and deposit it in safe hands without disclosing to their family members except those who they choose to tell about the existence of the will and its contents.

About 200 elderly persons have registered with Dharohar an initiative of [NGO Agewell Foundation](#) that provides help not just for drafting a will but also takes the responsibility of keeping it secret and in safe custody. The will document, the NGO assures, would be handed over to those named in the will after the death of the elderly person.

Speaking to Times City about the need for Dharohar, Himanshu Rath from Agewell said the NGO's helpline for old people receives a few calls almost every day from elderly asking for help to draft their will. "Subsequently, many people call back to find out where they could keep the will. They say if their family members get to read its contents, it will cause discontentment and they might have to put up with extreme circumstances. In fact, many old people do not write a will just because they do not have a safe place to keep it. This is the reason Dharohar was formed," Rath pointed.

After his interactions with the elderly both through the helpline and in person, Rath feels that often people find it difficult to satisfy all their legal heirs. "In such a situation it becomes impractical to disclose the will details to family members. Fearing that the will might end up in wrong hands, many elderly take the services of bank lockers or advocates. But for these, they have to pay high charges, monthly or on annual basis, which discourages them," said Rath.

The Dharohar facility offers an affordable solution to this problem. An elderly person can deposit the will document with Agewell Foundation for safe custody in a sealed envelope. "The document can be delivered in person in the presence of two witnesses. It can also be handed over in a sealed envelope to an Agewell representative at the elderly person's residence in the presence of two witnesses," Rath explained.

Under the scheme, a formal receipt for will deposit is issued at a one-time charge of Rs 1,500. "And if the person wants to make any change, he or she can ask for the envelope in the presence of two witnesses. We just need the names and contact details of two persons who are to be handed over the will later," added Rath.