

Published: November 25, 2011.

Rules of senior citizens Act notified

Kavita Kishore

Government has to set up tribunal to hear cases of senior citizens to prevent inhuman treatment meted out to parents and senior citizens, the Puducherry Government notified the rules of the Maintenance of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, on October 27 this year.

The Act provides protection to parents and senior citizens, who have been ill-treated or abandoned. It also ensures that they are given appropriate healthcare and maintenance to improve their quality of life.

According to the rules of the Act, the government has to set up a tribunal that will have the ability to hear the cases of parents/senior citizens who have problems with their children, as long as they are not minors. In case the children are unwilling to take up the maintenance and care of the parent/senior citizen, the tribunal also has the powers to demand an allowance for the parents up to Rs. 10,000.

Speaking to The Hindu , a senior official from the Welfare Department said the government had already appointed one of the officers from the Social Welfare Department as a Maintenance Officer, who would take care of complaints from senior citizens. In case the parties were not satisfied with the verdict of the maintenance officer, they could refer their cases to the tribunal. The State had also set up an appellate tribunal, for appeals. The tribunal and the appellate tribunal however, were not legal bodies, the officer said.

The government will also set up a State council of senior citizens headed by the Chief Secretary to Government and including the Secretary to Government (welfare), specialists in senior citizen welfare, three senior citizens and the director of social welfare. The committee would ensure that the Act is being followed.

The Act also specifies that the government must set up old age homes with a minimum of 12 sq. m of living area – including kitchen area, dining area, bedroom/dormitory and medical room – per inmate. These homes are also directed to have toilet facilities for the physically challenged, recreation facilities, television, and primary healthcare facilities and be provided with ramps, handrails and lifts where necessary. In terms of admission of inmates to the old age homes, more indigent and needy persons would be given preference. Women would also be given a preference, and a separate women's dormitory must be set up in the homes. With regards to

protection of life and property of senior citizens, each police station has been directed to maintain a list of senior citizens within their jurisdiction, with special care being taken for those who are living by themselves. At least once a month, the police, along with a social worker or volunteer, would visit every senior citizen on the list.

Each police station has also been directed to form a volunteer's committee to ensure regular contact between the district administration and the senior citizens. They must also set up a list of Dos and Don'ts to be followed by senior citizens in the interest of their safety.

Speaking to The Hindu , president of the Pondicherry Senior Citizens' Welfare Association S.V. Iyer, said that even though there are laws that prevent abuse to senior citizens, there is very little being done to ensure that they are enforced.