

21ST April 2014

The State Commissioner,
State Commissionerate for the Differently abled
Jawaharlal Nehru Inner Ring Road
KK Nagar
Chennai 600 078.

Dear Sir

Subject - Non implementation of School Education Department's welfare schemes in special schools for visually impaired school going children.

Reference 1. PWD Act 1995.

Reference number 2 . http://cms.tn.gov.in/sites/default/files/documents/school_education_7.pdf

Reference number 3. <http://www.scd.tn.gov.in/schemes.php>

Nethrodaya is a social service institution serving for the welfare of the visually impaired population for the past 12 years.

We thank the Honorable Chief Minister of Tamilnadu for announcing various welfare schemes for the welfare of the visually impaired special school children. However ,we wish to bring to your kind notice that the following School Education Department welfare schemes are not being implemented fully in respect of the visually impaired students pursuing education in special schools.

1) Reference 1 cited above

Sections 61,62,63 of PWD Act 1995 empower the State commissioner to monitor and enforce strict implementation of welfare schemes, safeguard the rights of the persons with disabilities ,remove all barriers and to create equal opportunities to persons with disabilities We seek your kind intervention to ensure effective and speedy implementation of welfare schemes.

2 Reference number 2 cited above

The School Education Department is implementing various welfare schemes for the welfare of the school going students .In this connection we observe that many of such welfare schemes are not covered under the schemes implemented by the Welfare for the Differently abled Department in general and visually impaired students in particular which are listed below ;

- i) Special Cash incentives to reduce school drop outs
- ii) Supply of footwear
- iii) Supply of Educational Kits
- iv) Supply of note books

v) Supply of text books

vi) Financial Assistance for students who have lost their bread winning parents

3. Reference 3 cited above

The Department for welfare of the Differently abled run special schools that provides the following schemes to the students;

“Visually impaired are provided with free special education, Vocational Training, boarding and lodging, Scholarships. Readers’ allowance, CD players with audio recorded text CDs. Scribe allowance, Supply of Braille books & Four sets of Uniforms and Text books are given at free of cost every year.”

4. Schemes requiring Immediate Implementation.

Para 2(i) Special Cash incentives to reduce school drop outs.

Most of the visually impaired students are hailing from economically poor families. This scheme, if extended, will reduce the drop outs in respect of visually impaired students and encourage them to complete their studies.

Para 2 ii) Supply of footwear

It is unfortunate that the scheme is not yet extended to visually impaired students as the protection of feet of the visually impaired school children is very basic.

Para 2 III). Supply of Educational Kits

Educational kit consisting of Braille slates, stylus, abacus, tailor frame, Braille geometrical box, and tactile drawing pad with school bag is essential for the visually impaired children and it is very sad that this essential kit is not provided in the scheme of special education.

Para 2 IV) Supply of note books

Blank Braille sheets are not provided to the visually impaired students for Braille for class work

Para 2 v) Supply of text books`

Though Government, in principle, has agreed to supply free Braille text books to the visually impaired students, the Braille text books are invariably supplied to the students only at the fag end of the academic year and many students do not get these Braille text books. The Braille text books must be provided to the students in the beginning of the academic year as being given by School education Department.

As the School Education Department is having an online digital library of school text books and the previous years question papers, e- text books, blueprints are readily available on the website for the benefit of general students. We strongly feel and suggest that the Welfare of

the differently abled Department must upload screen reader accessible text format, audio format, Braille format, text books such as electronic text books, blue prints, previous years' question papers, contraction books, mathematical formulae, special education tutorials etc with magnifying facility for low vision students.

Para 2 VI) Financial Assistance for students who have lost their bread winning parents

Many visually impaired school children were neglected by their parents on account of the stigma of disability on the one hand and poverty on the other hand. In the circumstances, sudden death of the bread winner of these families will be disastrous to the education of these students. Absence of a scheme of providing financial assistance to visually impaired students who have lost their bread winning parents is rather unfortunate. There is an urgent need to include this scheme.

5 Disbursement of scholarship and readers allowance to visually impaired special school students.

At present the Principal/Headmasters of special schools are receiving the entire scholarship amount of students studying in their respective schools and in turn they disburse the amount to the concerned students. Despite the Commissioner issuing orders to disburse scholarship and readers allowance through ECS system, the District Differently Abled Rehabilitation Officers(DDARO) are not implementing the order in respect of Government Schools and Aided Special Schools. The District Differently Abled Rehabilitation Officers(DDARO) disburse the scholarship amounts only to students of SSA and RMSA and college students through ECS. We appeal to you to instruct the District Differently Abled Rehabilitation officers(DDARO) to disburse the scholarship and readers allowance through ECS in respect of visually impaired students studying in Government Schools and Aided Special Schools.

6. Strengthening of Government Special schools

Most of the special middle schools and primary schools run by the Government do not have desirable student strength compared to the Aided Middle Schools. We request the Government to take necessary steps to enhance the enrollment of students in government middle and primary special schools.

7. Non-availability of subject teachers

Further there is acute shortage of subject teachers in most of the government run special schools resulting in poor academic performance of the students. We therefore request that steps may be initiated to appoint subject teachers expeditiously.

8. Cash award for toppers of visually impaired students

Government has been encouraging the students with disability by giving cash awards to toppers in Board examinations. It was expected that the award money must be disbursed within one month from the date of publication of results. However it is observed that the cash award was given at the end of the subsequent academic year. With regard to School Education, the cash awards are given on time. The inordinate delay in awarding cash incentives is unreasonable. We appeal to Government to ensure that the cash awards to the toppers must be given within one month of the publication of results.

We request you to order the concerned authorities to distribute aids and appliances, uniforms, financial assistance under the welfare schemes meant for visually impaired special school students within one month from the commencement of the academic year.

We request you to rectify the above mentioned inequalities and ensure equal educational opportunities for visually impaired special school students.

We are looking forward to your positive action at the earliest.

Thanking You.

For Nethrodaya

C Govindakrishnan
Founder