

CHAPTER V  
RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

**18.Right to access mental healthcare.--** (1) Every person shall have a right to access mental healthcare and treatment from mental health services run or funded by the appropriate Government.

(2) The right to access mental healthcare and treatment shall mean mental healthservices of affordable cost, of good quality, available in sufficient quantity, accessible geographically, without discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, culture, caste, social or political beliefs, class, disability or any other basis and provided in a manner that is acceptable to persons with mental illness and their families and care-givers.

(3) The appropriate Government shall make sufficient provision as may be necessary, for a range of services required by persons with mental illness.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of range of services under sub-section (3), such services shall include—

- (a) provision of acute mental healthcare services such as outpatient and inpatient services;
- (b) provision of half-way homes, sheltered accommodation, supported accommodation as may be prescribed;
- (c) provision for mental health services to support family of person with mental illness or home based rehabilitation;
- (d) hospital and community based rehabilitation establishments and services as may be prescribed;
- (e) provision for child mental health services and old age mental health services.

(5) The appropriate Government shall,—

- (a) integrate mental health services into general healthcare services at all levels of healthcare including primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare and in all health programmes run by the appropriate Government;
- (b) provide treatment in a manner, which supports persons with mental illness to live in the community and with their families;
- (c) ensure that the long term care in a mental health establishment for treatment of mental illness shall be used only in exceptional circumstances, for as short a duration as possible, and only as a last resort when appropriate community based treatment has been tried and shown to have failed;
- (d) ensure that no person with mental illness (including children and older persons) shall be required to travel long distances to access mental health services and such services shall be available close to a place where a person with mental illness resides;
- (e) ensure that as a minimum, mental health services run or funded by Government shall be available in each district;
- (f) ensure, if minimum mental health services specified under sub-clause (e) of sub-section (4) are not available in the district where a person with mental illness resides, that the person with mental illness is entitled to access any other mental health service in the district and the costs of treatment at such establishments in that district will be borne by the appropriate Government:

Provided that till such time the services under this sub-section are made available in a health establishment run or funded by the appropriate Government, the appropriate Government shall make rules regarding reimbursement of costs of treatment at such mental health establishment.

(6) The appropriate Government shall make available a range of appropriate mental health services specified under sub-section (4) of section 18 at all general hospitals run or funded by such Government and basic and emergency mental healthcare services shall be available at all community health centres and upwards in the public health system run or funded by such Government.

(7) Persons with mental illness living below the poverty line whether or not in possession of a below poverty line card, or who are destitute or homeless shall be entitled to mental health treatment and services free of any charge and at no financial cost at all mental health establishments run or funded by the appropriate Government and at other mental health establishments designated by it.

(8) The appropriate Government shall ensure that the mental health services shall be of equal quality to other general health services and no discrimination be made in quality of services provided to persons with mental illness.

(9) The minimum quality standards of mental health services shall be as specified by regulations made by the State Authority.

(10) Without prejudice to the generality of range of services under sub-section (3) of section 18, the appropriate Government shall notify Essential Drug List and all medicines on the Essential Drug List shall be made available free of cost to all persons with mental illness at all times at health establishments run or funded by the appropriate Government starting from Community Health Centres and upwards in the public health system:

Provided that where the health professional of ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha, homoeopathy or naturopathy systems recognised by the Central Government are available in any health establishment, the essential medicines from any similar list relating to the appropriate ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha, homoeopathy or naturopathy systems shall also be made available free of cost to all persons with mental illness.

(11) The appropriate Government shall take measures to ensure that necessary budgetary provisions in terms of adequacy, priority, progress and equity are made for effective implementation of the provisions of this section.

*Explanation.*—For the purposes of sub-section (11), the expressions—

(i) “adequacy” means in terms of how much is enough to offset inflation;

(ii) “priority” means in terms of compared to other budget heads;

(iii) “equity” means in terms of fair allocation of resources taking into account the health, social and economic burden of mental illness on individuals, their families and care-givers;

(iv) “progress” means in terms of indicating an improvement in the State’s response.

**19.Right to community living.--** (1) Every person with mental illness shall,—

(a) have a right to live in, be part of and not be segregated from society; and

(b) not continue to remain in a mental health establishment merely because he does not have a family or is not accepted by his family or is homeless or due to absence of community based facilities.

(2) Where it is not possible for a mentally ill person to live with his family or relatives, or where a mentally ill person has been abandoned by his family or relatives, the appropriate Government shall provide support as appropriate including legal aid and to facilitate exercising his right to family home and living in the family home.

(3) The appropriate Government shall, within a reasonable period, provide for or support the establishment of less restrictive community based establishments including half-way homes, group homes and the like for persons who no longer require treatment in more restrictive mental health establishments such as long stay mental hospitals.

**20. Right to protection from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.--** (1) Every person with mental illness shall have a right to live with dignity.

(2) Every person with mental illness shall be protected from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in any mental health establishment and shall have the following rights, namely:—

(a) to live in safe and hygienic environment;

(b) to have adequate sanitary conditions;

(c) to have reasonable facilities for leisure, recreation, education and religious practices;

(d) to privacy;

(e) for proper clothing so as to protect such person from exposure of his body to maintain his dignity;

(f) to not be forced to undertake work in a mental health establishment and to receive appropriate remuneration for work when undertaken;

(g) to have adequate provision for preparing for living in the community;

(h) to have adequate provision for wholesome food, sanitation, space and access to articles of personal hygiene, in particular, women's personal hygiene be adequately addressed by providing access to items that may be required during menstruation;

(i) to not be subject to compulsory tonsuring (shaving of head hair);

(j) to wear own personal clothes if so wished and to not be forced to wear uniforms provided by the establishment; and

k) to be protected from all forms of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse.

**21. Right to equality and non- discrimination.--** (1) Every person with mental illness shall be treated as equal to persons with physical illness in the provision of all healthcare which shall include the following, namely:—

(a) there shall be no discrimination on any basis including gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, culture, caste, social or political beliefs, class or disability;

(b) emergency facilities and emergency services for mental illness shall be of the same quality and availability as those provided to persons with physical illness;

(c) persons with mental illness shall be entitled to the use of ambulance services in the same manner, extent and quality as provided to persons with physical illness;

(d) living conditions in health establishments shall be of the same manner, extent and quality as provided to persons with physical illness; and

(e) any other health services provided to persons with physical illness shall be provided in same manner, extent and quality to persons with mental illness.

(2) A child under the age of three years of a woman receiving care, treatment or rehabilitation at a mental health establishment shall ordinarily not be separated from her during her stay in such establishment:

Provided that where the treating Psychiatrist, based on his examination of the woman, and if appropriate, on information provided by others, is of the opinion that there is risk of harm to the child from the woman due to her mental illness or it is in the interest and safety of the child, the

child shall be temporarily separated from the woman during her stay at the mental health establishment:

Provided further that the woman shall continue to have access to the child under such supervision of the staff of the establishment or her family, as may be appropriate, during the period of separation.

(3) The decision to separate the woman from her child shall be reviewed every fifteen days during the woman's stay in the mental health establishment and separation shall be terminated as soon as conditions which required the separation no longer exist:

Provided that any separation permitted as per the assessment of a mental health professional, if it exceeds thirty days at a stretch, shall be required to be approved by the respective Authority.

(4) Every insurer shall make provision for medical insurance for treatment of mental illness on the same basis as is available for treatment of physical illness.

**22. Right to information** - (1) A person with mental illness and his nominated representative shall have the rights to the following information, namely:—

(a) the provision of this Act or any other law for the time being in force under which he has been admitted, if he is being admitted, and the criteria for admission under that provision;

(b) of his right to make an application to the concerned Board for a review of the admission;

(c) the nature of the person's mental illness and the proposed treatment plan which includes information about treatment proposed and the known side effects of the proposed treatment;

(d) receive the information in a language and form that such person receiving the information can understand.

(2) In case complete information cannot be given to the person with mental illness at the time of the admission or the start of treatment, it shall be the duty of the medical officer or psychiatrist in-charge of the person's care to ensure that full information is provided promptly when the individual is in a position to receive it:

Provided that where the information has not been given to the person with mental illness at the time of the admission or the start of treatment, the medical officer or psychiatrist in charge of the person's care shall give the information to the nominated representative immediately.

**23. Right to confidentiality** --(1) A person with mental illness shall have the right to confidentiality in respect of his mental health, mental healthcare, treatment and physical healthcare.

(2) All health professionals providing care or treatment to a person with mental illness shall have a duty to keep all such information confidential which has been obtained during care or treatment with the following exceptions, namely:—

(a) release of information to the nominated representative to enable him to fulfil his duties under this Act;

(b) release of information to other mental health professionals and other health professionals to enable them to provide care and treatment to the person with mental illness;

(c) release of information if it is necessary to protect any other person from harm or violence;

(d) only such information that is necessary to protect against the harm identified shall be released;

- (e) release only such information as is necessary to prevent threat to life;
- (f) release of information upon an order by concerned Board or the Central Authority or High Court or Supreme Court or any other statutory authority competent to do so; and
- (g) release of information in the interests of public safety and security.

**24. Restriction on release of information in respect of mental illness.**- (1) No photograph or any other information relating to a person with mental illness undergoing treatment at a mental health establishment shall be released to the media without the consent of the person with mental illness.

(2) The right to confidentiality of person with mental illness shall also apply to all information stored in electronic or digital format in real or virtual space.

**25. Right to access medical records.** (1) All persons with mental illness shall have the right to access their basic medical records as may be prescribed.

(2) The mental health professional in charge of such records may withhold specific information in the medical records if disclosure would result in,—

- (a) serious mental harm to the person with mental illness; or
- (b) likelihood of harm to other persons.

(3) When any information in the medical records is withheld from the person, the mental health professional shall inform the person with mental illness of his right to apply to the concerned Board for an order to release such information.

**26. Right to personal contacts and communication** - (1) A person with mental illness admitted to a mental health establishment shall have the right to refuse or receive visitors and to refuse or receive and make telephone or mobile phone calls at reasonable times subject to the norms of such mental health establishment.

(2) A person with mental illness admitted in a mental health establishment may send and receive mail through electronic mode including through e-mail.

(3) Where a person with mental illness informs the medical officer or mental health professional in charge of the mental health establishment that he does not want to receive mail or email from any named person in the community, the medical officer or mental health professional in charge may restrict such communication by the named person with the person with mental illness.

(4) Nothing contained in sub-sections (1) to (3) shall apply to visits from, telephone calls to, and from mail or e-mail to, and from individuals, specified under clauses (a) to (f) under any circumstances, namely:—

- (a) any Judge or officer authorised by a competent court;
- (b) members of the concerned Board or the Central Authority or the State Authority;
- (c) any member of the Parliament or a Member of State Legislature;
- (d) nominated representative, lawyer or legal representative of the person;
- (e) medical practitioner in charge of the person's treatment;
- (f) any other person authorised by the appropriate Government.

**27. Right to legal aid.**-- (1) A person with mental illness shall be entitled to receive free legal services to exercise any of his rights given under this Act.

(2) It shall be the duty of magistrate, police officer, person in charge of such custodial institution as may be prescribed or medical officer or mental health professional in charge of a mental

health establishment to inform the person with mental illness that he is entitled to free legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 or other relevant laws or under any order of the court if so ordered and provide the contact details of the availability of services.

**28. Right to make complaints about deficiencies in provision of services.**-(1) Any person with mental illness or his nominated representative, shall have the right to complain regarding deficiencies in provision of care, treatment and services in a mental health establishment to,—

(a) the medical officer or mental health professional in charge of the establishment and if not satisfied with the response;

(b) the concerned Board and if not satisfied with the response;

(c) the State Authority.

(2) The provisions for making complaint in sub-section (1), is without prejudice to the rights of the person to seek any judicial remedy for violation of his rights in a mental health establishment or by any mental health professional either under this Act or any other law for the time being in force.