

IN THE COURT OF STATE COMMISSIONER
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(UNDER THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016)

LADY WILLINGDON COLLEGE CAMPUS, KAMARAJAR SALAI,

CHENNAI – 600 005.

PRESENT: THIRU. JOHNY TOM VARGHESE, I.A.S.,

NOTICE

REF: D.O. No. Secy / 1 / 2020 from the Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, Dated. 23.3.2020.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared COVID-19 Novel Corona Virus that has affected 160 Countries as a Pandemic. It is pertinent to mention that the Government of Tamil Nadu has strengthened its safety, surveillance and control measures in this context.

The Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu is promoting various sensitisation and awareness advisories amongst public on personal hygiene, self quarantine and other innovative measures to overcome the outbreak and also by promoting these advisories for protection and safety among the public, in its official website.

In this context, a D.O. letter has been received vide ref. cited above from the Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of India for creating awareness and preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19 amongst the Persons with Disabilities. It has emphasized in the letter that, the information pertaining to the above is very often not accessible by the persons with disabilities and as such they remain unaware of the safety measures to be taken by them to deal with the situation.

Therefore, as per Rule.15 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules (Central) which mandates that, all the websites must be made accessible in accordance with guidelines for Government websites, as adopted by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, all public domain documents to be uploaded in the website either in OCR or ePUB format and therefore, it has been requested to issue appropriate instructions to Health and Publicity Departments in the State to take immediate measures to make all the publicity material related to COVID-19 accessible in the following manner:-

- a) Print material in Braille and audio tape for persons with visual disability.

- b) Videographic material with sub-titles and sign language interpretation for persons with hearing disability.
- c) Information in the websites and social media with all documents in OCR / e-PUB format.

In this context, the section.42 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates that, ***“The appropriate Government shall take measures to ensure that, (i) all contents available in audio, print and electronic media are in accessible format; (ii) persons with disabilities have access to electronic media by providing audio description, sign language interpretation and close captioning; (iii) electronic goods and equipment which are meant for everyday use are available in universal design”***

In addition to the above, it has also been requested in the Ministry’s letter, to advice the Health Department of the State / UTs to issue appropriate instructions for priority in treatment of persons with disabilities as envisaged in section.25 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Therefore, I herewith request the Health and Family Welfare Department to make their press releases or advisories pertaining to COVID-19 Novel Corona Virus in accessible format as per the above mentioned instructions and made available for viewing in official website of Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu in OCR / e-PUB format, enabling the persons with disabilities to follow the safety precautionary measures initiated by Government without any hassle. It is also requested to prioritize medical treatment of persons with disabilities as per the provisions granted in the above said Act.

The action taken in the above regard may kindly be intimated to this Court, for submitting the same to Government of India.

**(SD/- JOHNY TOM VARGHESE)
STATE COMMISSIONER FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.**

TO:-

Principal Secretary to Government,
Health and Family Welfare Department,
Secretariat, Chennai – 600 009.

COPY TO:-

Secretary to Government,
Welfare of Differently Abled Persons Department,
Secretariat, Chennai – 600 009.