

National Trust status in brief

The National Trust is a statutory body constituted by an Act of Parliament namely “The National Trust for the welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999”.

The objectives of the National Trust are as follows:-

- i. To enable and empower persons with disability to live as independently and as fully as possible within and as close to the community to which they belong;
- ii. To strengthen facilities to provide support to persons with disability to live within their own families;
- iii. To extend support to registered organizations to provide need based services during period of crisis in the family of persons with disability;
- iv. To deal with problems of persons with disability who do not have family support;
- v. To promote measures for the care and protection of persons with disability in the event of death of their parent or guardian;
- vi. To evolve procedures for the appointment of guardians and trustees for persons with disability requiring such protection;
- vii. To facilitate the realization of equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of persons with disability; and
- viii. To do any other act which is incidental to the aforesaid objects.

The National Trust has been set up to discharge two basic duties- legal and welfare. Legal duties are discharged through Local Level Committees (LLC) and providing Legal Guardianship. Welfare duty is discharged through the Schemes. The activities of the National Trust inter-alia include training, awareness and capacity building programmes and shelter, care giving and empowerment. The National Trust is committed to facilitate equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan), covered under the Act.

1. Registration of Organizations

As per section 12(1) of the National Trust Act, any voluntary organization, the association of parents of persons with disabilities or the association of persons with disabilities, working in the field of Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation And Multiple Disabilities”, already registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860(21 of 1860), or section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956(1 of 1956), or Public Charitable Trust Act and under Persons With Disability Act, 1995 or Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 in the concerned state and on NGO Darpan Portal of Niti Aayog, can apply for registration in the National Trust by filling up online form along with Form 'E' (to be generated through the online system while filling up the online registration form), duly stamped and signed by the Head of the organization. The registration of such organization shall be necessary with the Trust for availing benefits under the schemes of the Trust.

2. Appointment of Legal Guardians

- i. Section 14-17 of The National Trust Act, 1999 elaborates on Guardianship for persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, to be given by the Local Level Committee. Guardianship is a need based enabling provision.
- ii. A guardian is a person, who is appointed to look after another person or his property. He or she assumes the care and protection of the person for whom he/she is appointed the guardian. The guardian takes all legal decisions on behalf of the person and the property of the ward.
- iii. Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities are in a special situation as even after they have acquired 18 years of age, they may not always be capable of managing their own lives or taking legal decisions for their own betterment. Therefore, they may require someone to represent their interests in the legal areas throughout their lives. However, in cases of cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities, there may be a need for only limited guardianship because of the availability of enabling mechanisms and/ or scientific facilitations, which enable such persons to function with varying degrees of independence.
- iv. Under section 14 of the National Trust Act, the Local Level Committee headed by the District Collector is empowered to receive application in Form A under Rule 16(1) & appoint guardians in Form B under Rule 16(2) for persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation & Multiple Disabilities. It also provides mechanism for monitoring and protecting their interests including their properties.

3. Local Level Committee (LLC)

Under Section 13 of the National Trust Act 1999, a Local Level Committee is required to be constituted in every district of the country for a period of three years or till it is reconstituted by the Board consisting of following members:-

- An officer of the Civil Service of the Union or of the State not below the rank of District Magistrate or a District Commissioner of a District;
- A representative of an organization registered with the National Trust; and
- A person with disability as defined in Clause (t) of Section 2 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995(1 of 1996)

The function of Local Level Committee is to screen, appoint, monitor and remove legal guardians. LLCs also promote activities such as Awareness generation, convergence and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities.

4. State Nodal Agency Centre (SNAC)

In order to carry out the activities of the National Trust, its effective implementation at the state level and for coordination/liaison with the concerned State Government Departments, a reputed Registered Organization of the National Trust is appointed as State Nodal Agency Centre (SNAC). The National Trust provides funds for conducting institutional activities namely meetings of Registered Organizations / Local Level Committee(LLCs), State Level Coordination Committees (SLCCs), documentation / Reporting, honorarium for coordinator, misc. activities. At present, there are 28 SNACs in the country.

5. State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC)

Every State/UT Government has been requested to set up a State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) for effective implementation and monitoring of the schemes of the National Trust. The Secretary of the State Government looking after disability affairs is the Chairperson and the respective SNAC is the convener of the Committee. So far, SLCCs have been constituted in 30 States / Union Territories.

6. The Schemes highlights are as under:

i. Disha (Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme for 0-10 years)

This is an early intervention and school readiness scheme for children in the age group of 0-10 years with the four disabilities covered under the National Trust Act and aims at setting up Disha Centres for early intervention for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) through therapies, trainings and providing support to family members. The project holders should provide day-care facilities to PwDs (Divyangjan) for at least 4 hours in a day (between 8 am and 6 pm) along with age specific activities. There should be a Special Educator or Early Intervention Therapist, Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist and Counsellor for PwDs (Divyangjan) along with Caregiver and Ayas in the centre.

ii. VIKAAS (Day Care Scheme for 10+ years)

This is a Day care scheme for Divyangjan attaining the age of 10 years and above, primarily to expand the range of opportunities available to a person with disability for enhancing interpersonal and vocational skills as they are on a transition to higher age groups. The centre offers care giving support to Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) during the time the Divyangjan are in the Vikaas centre. In addition, it also helps in supporting family members of the Persons with disabilities covered under the National Trust Act to get some time during the day to fulfil other responsibilities. The project holders should provide day-care facilities to Divyangjan for at least 6 hours in a day (between 8 am and 6 pm) along with age specific activities. Day care should be opened for at least 21 days in a month.

iii. Disha-cum Vikaas Scheme (Day Care)

For the Registered Organisations, who were implementing multiple schemes, an option for implementing merged scheme was given. Based on the consent given by the project holders and the scheme guidelines, 42 project holders were allotted the merged Disha-cum-Vikaas Scheme (Day Care) w.e.f. 1.4.2018.

iv. Samarth (Respite Care Residential Scheme)

The objective of Samarth scheme is to provide respite care home for orphans or abandoned, families in crisis and also for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) from BPL & LIG families including destitute with at least one of the four disabilities covered under the National Trust Act. The scheme provides for creating opportunities for family members to get respite time in order to fulfil other responsibilities. Under the Scheme Samarth Centres are set up for providing group home facility for all age groups with adequate and quality care service with acceptable living standards including provision of basic medical care from professional doctors.

v. Gharaunda (Group Home for Adults)

The objective of Gharaunda scheme is to provide an assured home and minimum quality of care services throughout the life of the persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities. The scheme also facilitates establishment of requisite infrastructure for the assured care system throughout the country, encourage assisted living with independence and dignity and provide care services on a sustainable basis.

vi. Samarth-cum-Gharaunda Scheme (Residential)

For the Registered Organisations, who were implementing multiple schemes, an option for implementing merged scheme was given. Based on the consent given by the ROs and the scheme guidelines, 12 ROs were allotted the merged Samarth-cum-Gharaunda Scheme (Residential) w.e.f. 1.4.2018.

vii. Badhte Kadam (Awareness, Community Interaction & Innovative Project Scheme)

This scheme shall support Registered Organisations (ROs) of the National Trust to carry out activities that focus on increasing the awareness of The National Trust disabilities. Aim of the scheme is to create community awareness, sensitization, social integration and mainstreaming of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan). The National Trust shall sponsor maximum of 4 events for each Registered Organization per year. Each Registered Organization should conduct at least one event either for community, educational institutes or medical institutes, in a year.

viii. 'Niramaya' Health Insurance Scheme

The National Trust is implementing Niramaya Health Insurance Scheme for persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities and there is no age bar. Under the Scheme, there is an insurance cover of Rs.1 lakh, which covers OPD, Diagnostic Test, Therapies, Corrective Surgeries, Alternative Medicine and Transportation. The treatment can be taken from any authorized medical practitioner/health care center. It is on reimbursement basis. The scheme is operational in the entire country through more than 700 Registered Organisations who facilitate Divyangjan in filling the online application. Any person with aforesaid condition can avail benefit by paying a nominal fee. From 2021-22, renewal under the scheme can be done by parents/guardians themselves through our portal.

The enrollment/renewal fee is not charged for Divyangjan who have Legal Guardian other than natural parents.

7. Sampark-`In the Hour of Need scheme`

The National Trust had launched Sampark – `In the hour of need' scheme on 1-11-2019. The objective of the scheme is to provide necessary support to Divyangjan covered under the National Trust Act in case of natural calamity like – Cyclone, Earthquake, Flood etc. for a period of 100 days, to commence from the first day of each programme. The Sampark scheme was implemented in the Super Cyclone affected 10 districts of Odisha and 13 districts of West Bengal. At present, the Sampark scheme is being implemented in 3 districts of Maharashtra, 9 districts of Gujarat, 9 districts of Odisha and 8 districts of West Bengal, due to the cyclones `Tauktae' and `YAAS'. The 100 days period of the scheme ended on 8-11-2021. However, due to the unique nature of scheme, which requires lot of publicity and coordination among Registered Organizations, parents and professionals working in the field, the scheme is extended till 16-2-2022.