

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY, AMARAVATI.

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR ORGANISING LOK ADALATS,
SPREADING AWARENESS AND PROVIDING LEGAL AID
DURING COVID-2019 PANDEMIC.**

The outburst of Covid-19 caused dislocation of work. Therefore, the Lok Adalats, awareness camps could not be organized in the conventional methods. The NALSA also has been cancelling the National Lok Adalats scheduled during the period in view of the prevailing situation. While canceling the National Lok Adalat, scheduled on 11th July, 2020 the NALSA suggested that Lok Adalats may organize at Micro level, if required, on specific subjects such as MACT cases, matters related to financial institutions, criminal compoundable cases including NI Act cases, family Court matters (except divorce) etc. During the month of June, 2020, some Districts have organized Lok Adalats and few cases have been settled.

Considering the situation and to meet the needs of the public, the State Authority proposes to take all necessary steps including the following by the Legal Services Institutions in the State :

1. Organizing Lok Adalats :

- Cases as listed above may be first identified and the parties may be contacted over phone to find out their willingness for settlement of those cases.
- If parties agree, the cases may be posted before Lok Adalat by giving prior intimation to the parties not exceeding four or five per day so as to keep social rather physical distancing among the persons during waiting, counselling etc.
- The departments like Police, Revenue, Bankers etc., be informed to be present before the Lok Adalat, i.e., one authorized person alone who can enter into compromise for settlement of such cases.
- Preferably, one to one discussion be made so as to avoid crowding of people.
- The Jail Adalats may be organized in co-ordination with the Jail Authorities avoiding crowding and maintaining social rather physical distancing.
- The parties be supplied Award copies on the same day duly signed by the Members of Lok Adalat.

2. Spreading Awareness :

- Awareness shall be created by the DLSAs by conducting talk shows and other such programmes in All India Radio, Community Radios, Electronic Media, by way of News, articles in the local news papers.
- Feasibility of adopting other modes of social media viz., SMS, Whatsapp, Youtube may be considered for creating awareness.

3. Providing Legal Aid :

- Application for Legal Aid in conventional mode may not be feasible presently.
- Request for Legal Assistance through email, interactive online facility etc., may be encouraged and accepted as contemplated under NALSA (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010 as amended.
- The calls received on Helpline numbers or Mobile Numbers be recorded and the callers be provided legal aid if required as per Rules.
- The signatures of the parties on the applications may not be insisted but the supporting documents as may be required may be obtained through e-mail or whatsapp.
- The Advocates who will be entrusted the Legal Aid matters be instructed to contact the parties through phone and get the required documents through email or whatsapp and file the cases as required through online as per the instructions of the Hon'ble High Court.
- Further instructions, if any or intimation of status / progress of the case to the parties and the Legal Services Institution concerned through phone.

The endeavour for organizing Lok Adalats, spreading awareness, providing legal aid shall be with conscious of Covid-19 guidelines. Avoiding crowding, maintaining social rather physical distancing, sanitization of the proposed area, using masks etc., shall be followed. In no case, the above activities shall be carried out without following the Covid-19 guidelines.

MEMBER SECRETARY
A.P.State Legal Services Authority