

National Legal Services Authority (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010, provides a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the quality and progress of legal aid services

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The National Legal Services Authority (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010, provides a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the quality and progress of legal aid services through constitution of Monitoring and Mentoring Committees (MMCs) within all the legal services institutions, viz. Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC), High Court Legal Services Committees (HCLSCs), State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs), District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) and Taluk Legal Services Committees (TLSCs). The Regulation 8 of the aforesaid Regulations provides for Selection of legal practitioners as panel lawyers. As per Regulation 8(17), “If the panel lawyer is not performing satisfactorily or has acted contrary to the object and spirit of the LSA Act and these regulations, the Legal Services Institution shall take appropriate steps including withdrawal of the case from such lawyer and his removal from the panel.” The Regulations 10(1), provide for setting up of Monitoring and Mentoring Committees for close monitoring of the court based legal services rendered and the progress of the cases in the legal aided matters and to guide and advise the panel lawyers. As per Regulation 11(5) and 11(8), MMCs shall maintain a register for legal aid cases for monitoring the day-to-day progress of each case and the end results (success or failure) in respect of cases for which legal aid is allowed. This register is scrutinized every month by the Member Secretary or Secretary or Chairman, as the case may be and if the progress of the case is not satisfactory, the Committee may advise the Legal Services Institution to take appropriate steps.

This continuous follow up mechanism ensures accountability, transparency, and quality control in delivery of legal services.

Legal aid lawyers, like any other advocate, are fully empowered to seek urgent reliefs and procedural directions in the interest of justice, and courts consider such requests on merit alone depending upon facts and circumstances of each case. Further, judicial officers and court officials are also aware of the vision and mandate of legal services institutions, including the importance of ensuring equal and effective access to justice for all.

Regular training/orientation and subject specific capacity-building initiatives are in place for panel lawyers and Legal Aid Defense Counsels (LADCs) under the aegis of the concerned Legal Services Authorities to enhance their skills. Capacity building and training program plays a pivotal role in professionalising legal services rendered by the panel lawyers and LADCs as well as it keeps them updated about the legal developments and relevant welfare schemes for the beneficiaries. It ensures that panel lawyers and defence counsels not only understand the law but are also compassionate, skilled and ready to uphold the constitutional right to legal representation for all, especially the marginalized.

The MMCs, constituted under the NALSA (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010, play a pivotal role in overseeing, evaluating, and maintaining the quality of legal aid services. These MMCs are entrusted with the responsibility to closely monitor court-based legal services and the progress of cases in legal aided matters and to guide and advise the panel lawyers. Further, MMCs also monitor case progress by obtaining periodic reports from panel lawyers and assessing their performance. If the progress of the case is found to be unsatisfactory, the Committee advises the concerned legal services institution to take appropriate steps. As per Regulation 8(17) of aforesaid Regulations, if the panel lawyer engaged is not performing satisfactorily, the Legal Service Institution shall take appropriate steps including withdrawal of the case from such lawyer and his removal from the panel.

This information was given by MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE; AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

Samrat/

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