



Government accords highest priority for ensuring safety and security of children and has undertaken various initiatives in this regard

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Government accords the highest priority for ensuring safety and security of children and has undertaken various initiatives in this regard. To safeguard children against sexual abuse and sexual harassment, Government has enacted The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. It defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. The Act was amended in 2019 to introduce more stringent punishment including death penalty for committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Rules, 2020 provide a child-friendly legal framework for the protection of children from sexual offences. Rule 4 of the POCSO Rules, 2020 provides for the appointment of a Support Person to render assistance to the child throughout the process of investigation and trial, wherever deemed necessary by the Child Welfare Committee. The Support Person is a person or organization working in the field of child rights or protection, recognized by the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), or a person employed by the DCPU. The Support Person is responsible for facilitating access to support services, keeping the child and family informed about the progress of the case, coordinating with concerned authorities, safeguarding the best interests of the child, and maintaining confidentiality throughout the legal process.

Further, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has issued the "Model Guidelines with respect to Support Persons under Section 39 of the POCSO Act, 2012", which, inter alia, provide for the constitution of a Selection Committee for empanelment of Support Persons, prescribe their qualifications, roles and responsibilities, and lay down the procedure for their selection and deployment. The primary objective of the Support Person is to provide emotional and psychological support to child victims during the legal process and to ensure their well-being, protection and access to appropriate services.

To facilitate monitoring and coordination among stakeholders, NCPCR has developed the POCSO Tracking Portal for real-time tracking of cases relating to child sexual abuse. The Portal also captures information regarding the appointment of Support Persons in POCSO cases.

The implementation of the POCSO Act and Rules, including the identification, recognition, empanelment and deployment of Support Persons in accordance with the prescribed framework, is the responsibility of the respective State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. The Ministry of Women and Child Development regularly issues advisories, convenes review meetings, undertakes capacity-building initiatives, and follows up with States and Union Territories to strengthen the effective implementation of the provisions of the POCSO Act and the Rules framed thereunder.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Women and Child Development Smt. Savitri Thakur in Rajya Sabha in reply to a question.

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