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NALSA VEER PARIVAR SAHAYATA YOJANA, 2025

For Providing Free and Competent Legal Services to Defence Personnel, Ex-servicemen and their Dependent Family Members

1. INTRODUCTION

Article 39A of the Constitution of India mandates the State to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid, ensuring that no citizen is denied access to justice due to economic or other disabilities.

Defence Personnel serve the nation under arduous conditions, often deployed in remote, inhospitable and high-conflict zones, far from their families and homes. Their duties expose them to unique occupational challenges and continuous physical and psychological strain. These circumstances frequently disrupt continuity of care, strain family life and hinder access to quality services in remote areas. In particular, the dependent family members of these personnel frequently encounter a range of legal challenges, administrative and financial hurdles in asserting their lawful rights and securing benefits they may be entitled to. The pressing nature, locational and national security constraints of their duty often prevent defence personnel from attending court proceedings, consulting legal professionals or seeking remedies through traditional legal channels. This systemic inaccessibility places their families, especially spouses, children, and elderly dependents, in a position of legal and emotional vulnerability.

To address this issue and provide the families of defence personnels with a responsive legal services platform, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), in pursuance of its mandate under the NALSA (Legal Services Clinics) Regulations, 2011, aims to establish dedicated legal services clinics for the welfare of dependents of the defence personnel and ex-servicemen (ESM), enabling them to access NALSA's robust India network of legal aid lawyers for legal assistance and advice. These clinics would be set up to act as a bridge, extending support to families of personnel who are serving or retired, ensuring access to timely, free, and effective legal assistance.

The vision of NALSA Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana, 2025 (hereinafter referred as 'Scheme') is to establish dedicated legal services clinics in collaboration with the Kendriya Sainik Board under the Ministry of Defence, thereby creating a legal support system for defence personnel, ex-servicemen, widows, and their dependents. With 34 Rajya Sainik Boards and 410 Zila Sainik Boards operating across the country. These welfare institutions play a pivotal role in the resettlement and welfare of the defence community. Integrating the legal services clinics within this existing framework will significantly strengthen the outreach and effectiveness of legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

This initiative envisions a seamless integration of legal support into the broader welfare ecosystem by leveraging digital platforms, fostering institutional synergy with the Ministry of Defence, deploying panels of legal aid lawyers and trained Para-Legal Volunteers (hereinafter referred to as 'PLVs'), preferably drawn from the ex-servicemen community. Collectively, these efforts aim to establish a comprehensive, accessible and responsive legal assistance network tailored to address the distinct needs of defence personnel and their families across India.

2. NAME OF THE SCHEME

This Scheme shall be referred to as the "**NALSA Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana, 2025**" and shall come into force from the date of its release.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

- i. To establish the legal services clinic at Kendriya, Rajya and Zila Sainik Welfare Boards to provide free and competent legal services and assistance to defence personnel, ex-servicemen and their dependents, in matters such as property disputes, welfare schemes, matrimonial disputes, civil disputes, and other legal matters.
- ii. To raise awareness amongst the serving defence personnel, ex-servicemen and their dependents about the functioning of legal services institutions, NALSA's and Government welfare schemes.
- iii. To create awareness and provide priority-based redressal mechanisms, including online platforms for e-counselling, e-mediation, e-Lok Adalats etc.
- iv. To, inter alia, use technology to equip speedy inter-district connectivity to facilitate the resolution of grievances through coordination between multi-agency stakeholders.
- v. To foster collaboration and synergy between the defence forces and legal services institutions, creating an integrated legal support system for beneficiaries.

4. SCOPE AND AMBIT

- A.** The Scheme shall extend to the whole of India where legal services institutions are operational, and where either defence personnel are deployed, or where their dependents reside or work, or where the ex-servicemen or their dependents reside or work.
- B.** The Scheme is applicable uniformly across all regions, including urban, rural and border areas, including high-altitude areas where legal services clinics are established at the Rajya and Zila level Sainik Welfare Boards.

5. BENEFICIARIES

A. Serving Defence Personnel, Ex-servicemen: The defence personnel and ex-servicemen who qualify under the categories enumerated in Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 shall be entitled to receive free legal services in accordance with the said provision.

B. Widows, children, and other dependent family members: The Scheme shall provide legal services to dependents of the defence personnel and ex-servicemen.

However, even if the defence personnel, ex-servicemen and their family members, (including dependents), are not covered within the ambit of Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to receive legal services, they shall nonetheless have access to legal advice and assistance through a panel of pro bono lawyers of the concerned Legal Services Authority.

C. The beneficiaries of the Scheme can approach the legal services clinics so established or any Legal Services Authority for availing these facilities in all legal matters, including:

- i. Property-related disputes, including issues related to ancestral and self-acquired properties,
- ii. Family disputes, including matrimonial issues, maintenance, and custody of children,
- iii. Consumer matters,
- iv. Protection against financial frauds,
- v. Succession and inheritance-related matters,
- vi. Assistance in availing welfare schemes of the Central and State Governments,
- vii. Legal representation in criminal or civil matters affecting their family,
- viii. Assistance in availing certificate of disability and other benefits under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) or any other applicable law,

The Scheme is designed to ensure that legal assistance is not denied due to distance, deployment, or duty-bound limitations, and that families of defence personnel and ex-servicemen receive equitable support in asserting their rights and resolving legal challenges through institutional mechanisms established under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME

A. Constitution of Legal Services Clinic

The Secretary, State Legal Services Authority / District Legal Services Authority, shall establish a legal services clinic as per the local area requirement/exigency and in consultation with the in-charge of the Rajya/Zila Sainik Board.

The legal services clinic shall function as an accessible platform for the delivery of legal services in accordance with the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and shall further the objectives as envisaged under the NALSA (Legal Services Clinics) Regulations, 2011.

The place of functioning of the legal services clinic, along with the frequency of sittings, based on the volume of applications, shall be decided accordingly at the following levels:

- i. **District Level:** Legal Services Clinic to be established at the **Zila Sainik Board (ZSB)** premises, covering the entire district, including remote or clusters of taluks.
- ii. **State Level:** Legal Services Clinic to be established at the **Rajya Sainik Board (RSB)** premises, covering the entire State.

B. There shall be a Nodal Officer at the legal services clinic nominated by the Rajya/Zila Sainik Board to work in collaboration with the Secretary, State Legal Services Authority (SLSA)/ District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) / Taluk Legal Services Authority (TLSC). The Nodal Officer shall act as the primary coordinator between the SLSA/DLSA/TLSC and the concerned Sainik Board (RSB/ZSB) and shall ensure regular functioning of the clinic on scheduled days and hours.

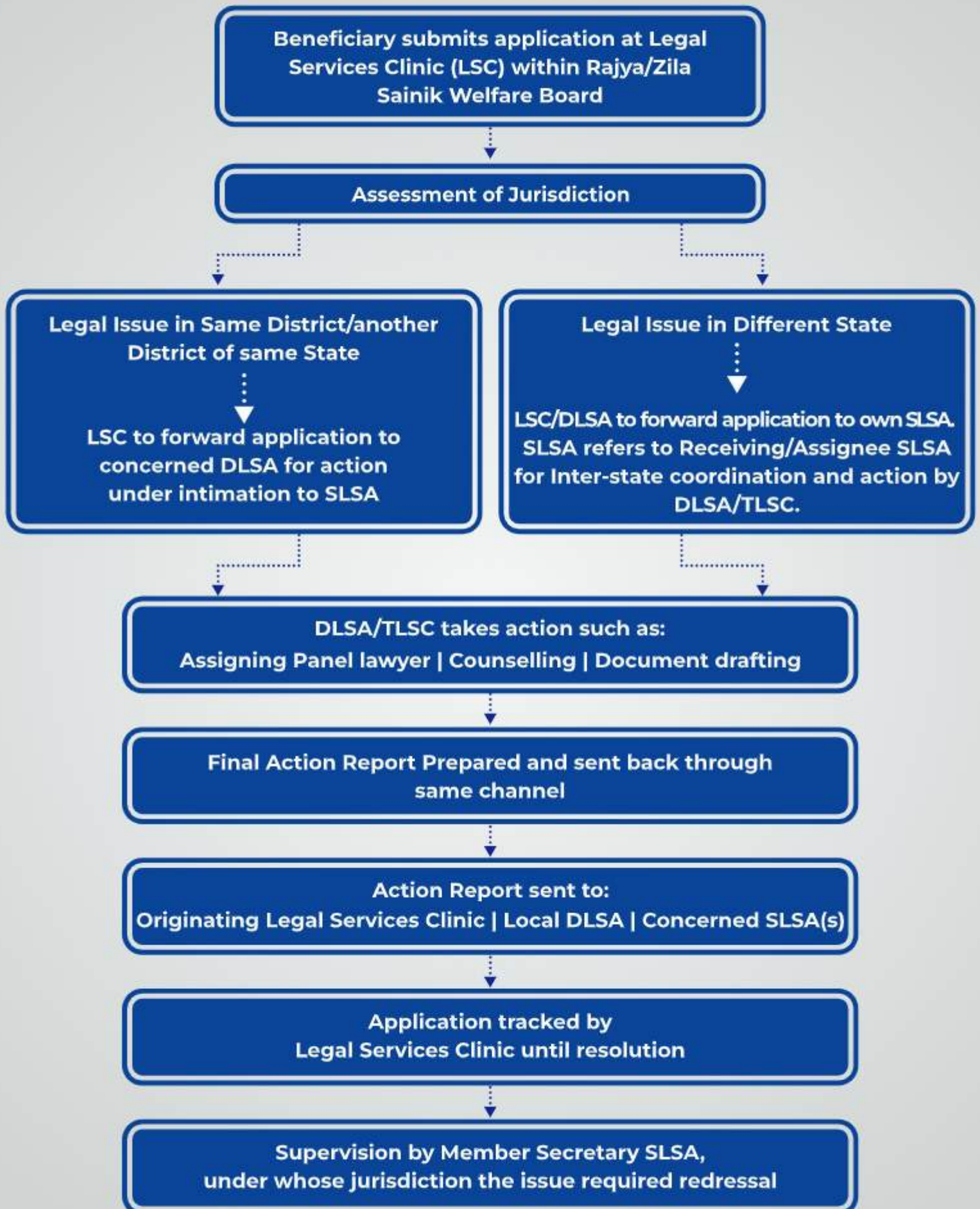
C. A panel of legal aid lawyers, preferably ex-servicemen, shall be nominated by the concerned Legal Services Authority, who shall visit the legal services clinic and work in coordination with the Nodal Officer. The Panel Lawyer shall render services as per the mandate prescribed under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Panel Lawyer shall maintain a physical record of applications received. These records will be regularly updated and shared with the concerned Secretary, Legal Services Authority, to ensure transparency and coordinated follow-up. The Panel Lawyer shall make an endeavour to process the applications in physical as well as online modes at the legal aid online portal/app. The Panel Lawyer appointed at the clinic shall be responsible for maintaining the requisite records. The registers shall include:

- **Legal Aid Application Register:** To record details of applicants, nature of legal issues, action taken, and current status.
- **Referral Register:** For inter-district or inter-state referrals made or received, along with follow-up and outcomes.
- **Daily Visitor Log:** Capturing daily footfall, purpose of visit, and services rendered.
- **Awareness Activity Log:** Recording outreach events, locations, participants, and topics covered.
- **Feedback and Grievance Register:** To gather beneficiary feedback and track any complaints for redressal.

- D.** To enhance outreach and awareness within the defence community, the Secretary, Legal Services Authority shall depute PLVs at such legal services clinics. Ex-servicemen and persons, including dependents, familiar with the working of defence institutions/establishments, and who are willing to undergo orientation for basic legal training from the SLSA/DLSA, shall be given preference to be nominated as PLVs at these clinics as per NALSA regulations. The PLVs shall have responsibilities as prescribed under Regulation 10 of the NALSA (Legal Services Clinics) Regulations, 2011. It shall be the discretion of the Secretary, SLSA/DLSA/TLSC to depute PLVs in addition to the Panel Lawyers wherever required.

7. PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

- i. The beneficiary can submit legal assistance applications at any legal services clinic functioning at:
 - a. Zila Sainik Board
 - b. Rajya Sainik Board
- ii. If the legal issue relates to the same district or another district of the same state, the application will be forwarded to the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) under intimation to the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA). The concerned DLSA will register the application and take necessary action.
- iii. If the legal issue relates to a different state, the concerned DLSA shall forward the application to its own SLSA, which will coordinate with the receiving/assignee SLSA in the state where the issue requires assistance. The receiving/assignee SLSA shall then forward the application to the concerned DLSA/TLSC having jurisdiction over the matter.
- iv. The referred DLSA/TLSC will take appropriate action, which may include legal counselling, document drafting, assigning a Panel Lawyer for representation, and any other legal assistance as may be necessary.
- v. Once action is taken, a final report will be prepared and shared back through the same channel.
- vi. The report will be communicated to:
 - a. The legal services clinic, where the application was originally submitted
 - b. The DLSA where the applicant is currently situated
 - c. The concerned SLSA(s) for record and reporting
- vii. All applications will be tracked by the respective legal services clinic until final resolution and proper communication to the applicant. The inter-district and inter-state coordination shall be ensured under the supervision of the Member Secretary, SLSA, under whose jurisdiction the issue required redressal.



8. USE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND E-SERVICES

To ensure seamless accessibility and efficiency in providing legal services or assistance to the beneficiaries, legal services clinics established under this Scheme shall endeavour to promote digital platforms of NALSA.

The PLVs and Panel Lawyers of the legal services clinics at the Zila and Rajya Sainik Boards shall:

- i. Identify and refer eligible cases, through SLSA/DLSA/TLSC, particularly family and matrimonial disputes, for structured online mediation by trained mediators empanelled by DLSAs. It shall be the endeavour to provide Online Mediation Training to Ex-servicemen, especially from the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department. PLVs and Panel Lawyers shall guide parties to access this service, and appropriate arrangements shall be made at legal aid clinics or DLSA offices for applicants who lack internet access or devices.
- ii. Suitable civil, pension, property, or family-related cases may be identified and routed to quarterly e-Lok Adalats. In districts with a high number of defence-related cases, dedicated slots or virtual rooms may be organised for defence personnel and ex-servicemen as part of the routine e-Lok Adalat framework.
- iii. PLVs and the concerned Panel Lawyer shall also guide beneficiaries in applying for legal services or assistance through the online application portal/mobile based app, where applicants can track their case status and access legal information.
- iv. Each legal services clinic shall prominently display QR codes and web links that direct users to access digital services. Awareness sessions may be conducted to educate defence families on how to access and use digital legal assistance platforms.
- v. Digital content developed by Legal Services Authorities shall be promoted for public legal education with special emphasis on assisting individuals with limited digital literacy.

9. SENSITISED LEGAL PROFESSIONALS FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

Every DLSA shall have a panel of lawyers who are sensitised to the unique legal issues and service realities of defence personnel. A minimum of five such advocates in selected districts will be assigned and trained in:

- i. Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) procedures and service jurisprudence.
- ii. Family law with inter-state or inter-regional implications.
- iii. Criminal defence and civil litigation.

Every DLSA which falls within the jurisdiction of AFT benches shall empanel lawyers trained in AFT law and procedure. Legal aid desks may be established within or

adjacent to AFT premises, in coordination with the Tribunal administration. These desks will assist litigants in drafting petitions, responses, affidavits, and attending hearings.

The empanelled lawyers will be responsible for providing legal assistance to defence personnel, ex-servicemen and their dependents in courts, tribunals, and mediation proceedings. They will also offer legal counselling through physical or virtual consultations, as appropriate. NALSA and respective SLSAs shall periodically conduct orientation and refresher sessions for these Panel Lawyers, with input from legal experts in defence matters. Additionally, Panel Lawyers shall also guide the aggrieved defence personnel on how to independently access and avail themselves of the in-built grievance redressal mechanisms available within their respective services.

10. PARA LEGAL VOLUNTEERS (PLVs) FROM DEFENCE BACKGROUND

To ensure grassroots outreach, the Scheme provides for the targeted identification and training of PLVs from within the defence community, in accordance with NALSA's Scheme for Para-Legal Volunteers (Revised) & Module for the Orientation - Induction - Refresher Courses for PLV Training.

PLVs may be selected from among:

- i. Widows of deceased defence personnel,
- ii. Ex-servicemen or their dependents residing in civilian areas,
- iii. Spouses or adult children of currently serving defence personnel.

These PLVs will be trained in basic legal processes, documentation support, and digital form-filing. They may serve as the first point of contact for the aggrieved, assist them in accessing legal services, and coordinate with DLSAs for assistance. Their presence is expected to instill trust and provide reassurance.

11. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The PLVs and Panel Lawyers engaged from the existing pool shall be appropriately trained and sensitised by the Secretary, SLSA/DLSA, on the operational framework of the Scheme as well as the specific service conditions and legal challenges faced by defence personnel, ex-servicemen and the dependents. Such training and orientation sessions shall be conducted at regular intervals to ensure continued effectiveness and awareness.

12. MONITORING/REPORTING

- 12.1 Every Legal Services Clinic shall submit weekly reports to the jurisdictional District Legal Services Authority as per the reporting format enclosed hereunder **Annexure-A**.

The Secretary, DLSA shall be the Veer Parivar Coordinator to manage cases and submit the consolidated Monthly Reports to SLSA as per the Reporting Format enclosed hereunder **Annexure-B** by the 10th of every month.

The Member Secretary, SLSA, shall be responsible for supervising the implementation of the Scheme within the respective states. The SLSA shall submit consolidated Quarterly Reports as per the Reporting Format enclosed hereunder **Annexure-C** to NALSA and coordinate directly with DLSAs across the state for effective follow-up. The Member Secretary, SLSA shall also act as a referral hub for Inter-state grievances, forwarding cases to other SLSAs where applicable. The Inter-State referral data shall be maintained as per the Reporting Format enclosed hereunder **Annexure-D**.

The reports under the Scheme shall be documented and submitted by the SLSAs to NALSA quarterly to ensure effectiveness and alignment with the legal aid initiative. All the data maintenance and reporting shall adhere to the formats annexed to the Scheme, ensuring consistency and accountability and alignment with the broad legal aid framework.

12.2 Feedback and Grievance Handling

- i. Any complaints/grievances may be submitted to the legal services clinic within the Rajya/Zila Sainik Board or to the concerned Legal Services Authority.
- ii. The legal services clinic or the legal services authority, as the case maybe, shall endeavour to resolve complaints within 15 working days, in accordance with NALSA's Standard Operating Procedure for Redressal of Complaints/Public Grievances. If not, they may be escalated to the concerned SLSA or NALSA for follow-up.
- iii. A feedback form may be provided to each applicant.

12.3 Periodic Review and Future Strengthening

To ensure the continued relevance, effectiveness, and responsiveness of the Scheme, NALSA shall conduct a periodic review every two years, in consultation with the State Legal Services Authorities, Defence and Ex-servicemen representatives, Panel Lawyers, and other stakeholders. These reviews will assess service delivery, emerging legal trends, beneficiary feedback, and technological efficiency. Based on the findings, necessary revisions, expansions, or improvements to the Scheme may be introduced. The objective shall remain to strengthen the framework in a way that reflects the evolving needs of defence personnel, ex-servicemen and the dependent family members, ensuring that members of the defence forces are not denied access to justice due to the constraints of service, geography, or financial hardship.

12.4 Constitution of Coordination Committee at District, State, and National Level

To iron out any difficulties, if faced, in the implementation of the present Scheme, the following Coordination Committees shall be formed at the District, State, and National Level:

District Level Coordination Committee:

- i. Chairman, District Legal Services Authority,
- ii. Chairman, Zila Sainik Board,
- iii. Secretary, District Legal Services Authority

State Level Coordination Committee:

- i. Member Secretary, State Legal Services Authority,
- ii. An officer not below the rank of Secretary to be nominated by the Chief Secretary of the State

National Level Coordination Committee:

- i. Member Secretary, National Legal Services Authority,
- ii. An officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary to be nominated by the Secretary, Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare, Ministry of Defence, Government of India

13. SAVING CLAUSE

The Scheme is intended to provide legal services in matters affecting the personal and civil rights of defence personnel, ex-servicemen, and their dependent family members, including areas such as family law, property disputes, succession, welfare entitlements, and access to government schemes.

However, it is expressly clarified that

- i. This Scheme shall not extend to matters that fall exclusively within the domain of the internal service rules, procedures, or disciplinary mechanisms of the Indian Defence Forces.
- ii. Legal Services Institutions shall provide their services in the proceedings relating to court martial and other related matters, provided that such assistance is permissible under section 12 of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and other relevant laws.
- iii. The Scheme is designed to complement, not conflict with, the institutional redressal systems already established within the Indian Defence Forces to avoid any overlap, interference, or jurisdictional conflict between legal services institutions and the defence forces' internal governance framework.

14. APPLICATION OF SCHEME TO PERSONNEL OF PARA MILITARY FORCES AND CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES

This Yojana/Scheme shall also apply mutatis mutandis in the case of serving or ex-service officers/officials of Paramilitary Forces and Central Armed Police Forces. The Competent Authority in the said forces may nominate a Nodal Officer who may coordinate with the concerned SLSA, DLSA or TLSC for addressing the grievances of their personnel.



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