

Juvenile Justice Newsletter

Monthly Newsletter of Activities Concerning Child Protection in Assam

Editorial

After Care Program is meant for children without family or other support who leave institutional care after they attain 18 years of age to sustain themselves during the transition from institutional to independent life. The objective of this after care program is to enable such children to adapt to the society and to encourage them to move away from an institution based life.

The programme will benefit the young adults without support who are thinking of starting a new and independent life for themselves. As per the guidelines for aftercare programme under ICPS; Government themselves or with the help of voluntary organizations may run the After Care programme for these young adults. State Child Protection Society, Assam has recently launched the After Care programme through Snehalaya, a civil society organisation of much repute.

This month issue brings to our reader an article which speaks elaborately on the programme and the components attached to it. We hope this will develop a clear concept on this service of After Care and also sensitize stakeholders and Care givers, on the importance of this transitional phase for a Young Adult.

Editorial Board,
State Child Protection Society, Assam

After Care Services in India and Way Forward

After Care is a largely unaddressed topic within the provision of child welfare services in India. Nevertheless, in this respect, India is unique compared to other South Asian Countries, having identified the establishment of After Care programs within institutionalized care, as mentioned in the JJ Act and Integrated Child Protection Scheme. However, despite this recognition, there remains little infrastructure to the development of much needed After Care programs, and in this respect, India is falling far short of meeting international standards and best practices of After Care Programmes, which is the last stage of any institutionalized children to step out to mainstream society.

In a recent multi-stakeholder consultation on After Care Services in India held at Delhi on 17th September organised Udayan Care (NGO) and UNICEF discussed the present state of After Care services in the country and deliberated upon the necessary changes to be taken to ensure smooth mainstreaming of institutionalized children. The following are the recommendation and suggestion which flowed out from this consultation.

Law and Policy

- Explicit rules and guidelines for After Care must be framed keeping in mind the preparation for the transition at an early stage, rather than confining it as a small part of JJ Act or ICPS.
- Counsellors in Children homes should prepare the institutionalized child/young adult for the transition; this should be a continuous process from the age of 15 years onwards to avoid sudden awakening up.
- It is to be looked at if the after care service can be availed only by youth without a family or all other individuals who are no longer in child care institutions but also doesn't have a adequate family to take care of his/her needs.
- It needs to be defined who is the implementing authority for After Care program and who owns the responsibility of monitoring it, whether SCPS, DCPO and/or CWC / JBB. At present the legal responsibility of CWC ends when children in care institutions attain 18 years of age. However, in the Juvenile Justice Act, the accountability of Government vis-a-vis children in care is extended to 21 years. Taking this forward, After Care should be brought under the ambit of Child Welfare Committee. Therefore, the role and extent of control of CWC should be specified and orientation programs be introduced for the members so that there are no confusions. CWC and other stakeholders should be instructed on the strategies of reintegration and rehabilitation of all such individuals into mainstream society.
- Strategies should be very specific in regard to Children in Conflict with Law now being 'set free' upon attaining 18 years of age or 'completing' their remand term. Specific guidelines should be framed for After Care vis-a-vis children in conflict with law in transition and reintegration in society; as also for Children with special needs.

- Greater duration of intensive services for transitioning young people should be stressed upon rather than a set time frame, as a part of holistic development for all institutionalized children.
- Government should provide special grants, funds and scholarships to youth leaving care institutions. Children from institutions should be provided admissions in reputed Government colleges.
- Roadmap of Government, Corporate and Community Partnerships for proper rehabilitation and reintegration of young adults has to be framed.
- Government should collaborate with police and other social departments to help create an independent identity for children within care institutions and youth in transition phase. This can include: availing identity proof, age proof, passport, bank accounts and other necessary documents to ensure a smooth integration of youth in the outer world. There should be a realization that hand holding has to be provided in the initial state till the time youth feel self sufficient.
- National tracking system of creating databases should be developed for all children, who will be in transition, in After Care; and once they leave care, they should be tracked for minimum 3 years to analyze the transitions and develop learning.
- Helpline numbers should be made available for youth who are out of the care institutions, where they can contact to seek guidance or counselling, whenever required, and can find solutions for their concerns.

Budgetary

- Increase the stipend for After Care children to sustain and help establish themselves; rather than one time, under proper supervision.
- Proper budgetary guidelines for After Care programs for better coordination between policy and practice for different stakeholders running institutionalized care for children.

Mental Health

- Health well-being is critical component of After Care. Such a program must necessarily include sexuality understanding.
- Within care institutions, efforts should be made to build the emotional immunity of the children. Mental well-being is closely associated with the development of a positive self identity. This can be built when child is provided consistent care and feeling of security in Children's Home, and by giving an opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with the caregivers. Attachment and permanency are crucial for the individual in need of care and protection, while s/he is in a child care institution and when s/he leaves the institution.
- Children living in Care Institutions have experienced difficult circumstances; the feeling of vulnerability and past experiences of loss can be triggered during the phase where the young adult has to separate from the spaces which are familiar and secure in some sense. In order to prevent stress, predictability, consistency and familiarity play an essential part. Programs should be developed to prepare them to face the outside world in order to handle new individuals and new relationships. After care plans for the youth in transition can help reduce insecurity. It is very important to involve

the individual in development of his/her after care plans. Therefore, the concept of informed choice of youth leaving care should be emphasized. This preparedness can decrease the chance of re-traumatising them and the long-term impact this may have on their psychological, physical, cognitive and social development.

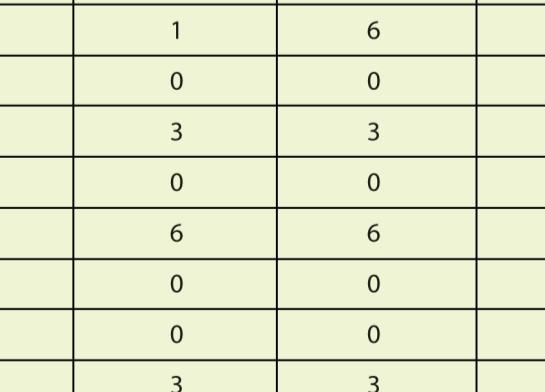
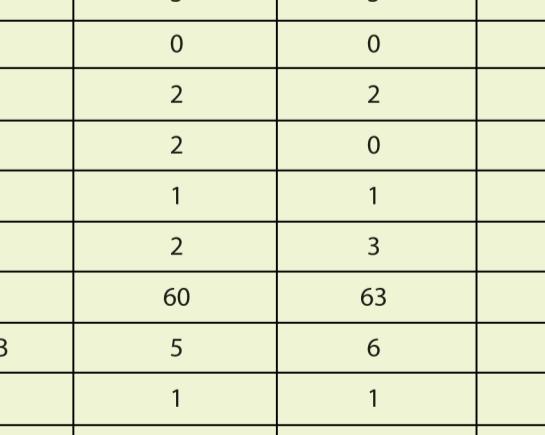
Capacity Building

- Care and protection for children in institutions should not remain limited to provision of food, clothing and shelter. Efforts have to be made to bring children to a high level of emotional, psychological, cognitive, physical and social understanding. Young adults should be prepared to be self reliant, by imparting everyday skills ranging from cooking to basic stitching work to managing financial budgets on their own.
- Individuals in care should be helped to aim high in life and do well in academics. They should be encouraged to take up professions, including higher educational degrees, medical, and engineering and software professions and should not be restricted only to vocation based programs.
- Creation of more vocational programmes in Government recognized institutions that are on market demand and provided opportunities to young adults leaving care; to enrol themselves into these courses and attain Government certified degrees. To make the programs in sync with the market demands, reforms should be made in ITI skill based courses. With the increasing importance of computers, training in computers should be made a part of the curriculum.
- Children within institutions should be provided with aptitude or psychometric tests to identify capabilities and skills they are best at. Career counselling should be provided to help them choose the occupation they want to take up. Care institutions and other stakeholders should work with children to provide them opportunities for strengthening their specific abilities which can later be taken up as their occupation. Employability skill based training should be based on the need of the hour.
- Engagement of corporate community to help stimulate vocational/job training. Efforts should be made to link their CSR (corporate social responsibility) program with After Care plans for young adults. Interaction with successful entrepreneurs should be organized to provide youth with various options for self employment and motivate them to choose occupations based on their interest.
- Self-defence trainings must be provided to young adults.
- Alumni meets should be organized regularly to provide a platform for young adults to come and share their experiences.
- An effective implementation of After Care program involves training and monitoring of all the stakeholders of the After Care process.

Community Participation

- Strong advocacy from all civil society organizations working on children's rights to stimulate development of After Care programs reflecting best practices.
- Communities should be sensitized on the issues of children living in care institutions, without any stigma, and encourage to involve After Care young adults in the local celebrations and make them feel a part of society.

After Care Programme in Assam

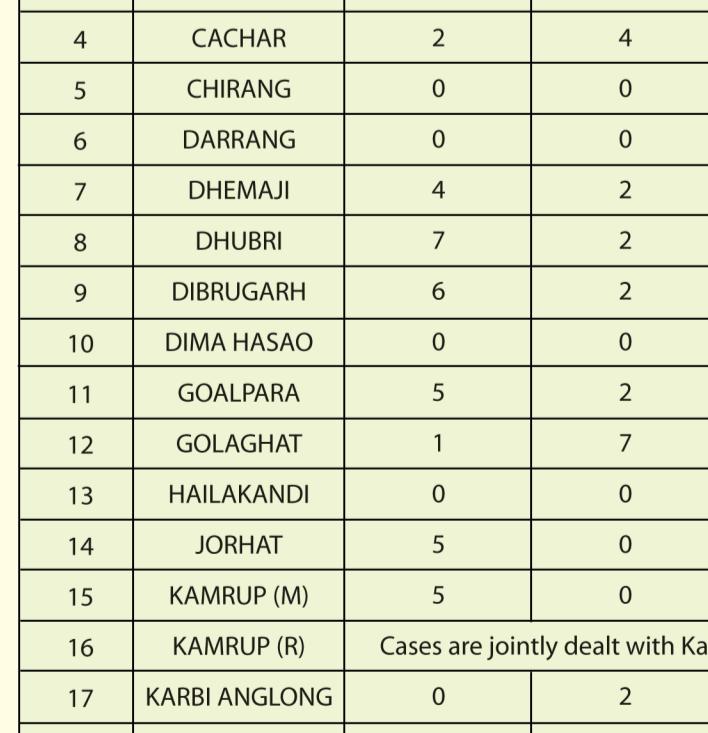



State Child Protection Society (SCPS) under the aegis of Department of Social Welfare, stated its first After Care Programme in the State as per guidelines given in the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. SCPS has followed the NGO-run model of the programme, as government run After Care model is still a distant dream. But in order to expedite the roll out of the After Care component under ICPS and a growing demand within Children Homes catering to Young Adults who have crossed 18th year of age, the Department decided to launch the After Care programme in collaboration with renowned Civil Society organisation in the field of Child Protection. Snehalaya; a civil society organisation running under the leadership of Fr. Lukose was entrusted to run this programme with department's support. Thereafter with few months of discussion and planning two After Care Homes were started for Young Adults in the State, one for Girls and the other for Boys.

The girl After Care Home is located at Ila-Snehalaya, Betuchi named as Fatima After Care Hostel and the Boys After Care Home is located in Fatsil Ambari Tini-Ali. The After Care Homes were formally inaugurated on 12th of September, 2014 by Mrs Pratima Devi Chairperson, Social Welfare Advisory Board, Assam in the presence Mrs. Junu Neog Administrative Officer, SPSU, Assam and Fr. Lukose, Director of Snehalaya as the Guest of Honour and other officials from State Child Protection Society.

Fr. Lukose in his speech specifically mentioned that, successful social reintegration of children in need of care and protection depends upon crucial factors like self-esteem and self-confidence that these young adults have built up during their stay in the Children's Home and Care givers will ensure that they can build upon these qualities within the Young Adults residing in these homes.

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam



Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of August 2014

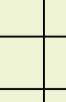
Sl. No.	Districts	Juvenile Justice Boards			Child Welfare Committees		
		No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending	No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending
1	BAKSA	Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB			0	0	17
2	BONGAIGAON	0	0	41	1	6	6
3	BARPETA	2	3	90	0	0	2
4	CACHAR	2	4	69	3	3	6
5	CHIRANG	0	0	28	0	0	0
6	DARRANG	0	0	149	6	6	9
7	DHEMAJI	4	2	22	0	0	6
8	DHUBRI	7	2	191	0	0	8
9	DIBRUGARH	6	2	49	3	3	2
10	DIMA HASAO	0	0	3	0	0	0
11	GOALPARA	5	2	112	2	2	2
12	GOLAGHAT	1	7	23	2	0	6
13	HAILAKANDI	0	0	10	1	1	1
14	JORHAT	5	0	38	2	3	2
15	KAMRUP (M)	5	0	168	60	63	57
16	KAMRUP (R)	Cases are jointly dealt with Kamrup (M) JJB			5	6	17
17	KARBI ANGLONG	0	2	51	1	1	4
18	KARIMGANJ	3	2	50	2	0	4
19	KOKRAJHAR	10	0	166	7	6	9
20	LAKHIMPUR	2	2	38	13	10	28
21	MORIGAON	2	0	6	4	4	20
22	NAGAON	13	4	248	17	16	6
23	NALBARI	3	3	36	1	1	11
24	SONITPUR	0	0	133	5	4	36
25	SIBSAGAR	4	1	55	5	2	1
26	TINSUKIA	3	0	56	3	2	30
27	UDALGURI	4	0	20	6	3	17
Total		81	36	1852	149	142	307

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam

For any feedback, write to :

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State Child Protection Society, Assam



DSW, Government of Assam

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