

Topic: Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Committee takes stock of child care and protection during COVID-19 second wave:

During the second Covid-19 wave, the Supreme Court of India's Juvenile Justice Committee, in collaboration with UNICEF, conducted a summary meeting to assess the steps taken by various states in terms of child care, protection, and well-being. They discussed what steps should be taken to ensure that any child in need receives the care and protection they require during this tough period. The Chairpersons and Members of Juvenile Justice Committees from numerous High Courts attended the examination conference.

Judge S. Ravindra Bhat of the Supreme Court of India, who also chairs the Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Committee, stressed the importance of stepping up efforts to ensure better child care, protection, and well-being. According to the chairperson, some children have lost one or both parents due to Covid-19, and some children are left without parental supervision and treatment while their parents are in the hospital or under medical care. These kids are more insecure than they've ever been. During the second wave of Covid, all primary players can work together to ensure the safety and security of children.

Justice Bhat went on to say that a system should be developed to meet the interim care needs of orphans, separated, or unaccompanied children, with specific instructions on what to do if a child has been exposed to the virus or has signs of the virus and requires isolation and treatment. He went on to say that caregivers and staff of care facilities, both government-run and privately run, should be vaccinated as frontline workers, and that these institutions' programmes should be deemed necessary.

Judges from all of the High Courts and politicians from different States and Union Territories spoke about the initiatives they are pursuing in their respective states. Setting up a state-level nodal officer and district taskforce for immediate action for treatment and safety of children during the latest pandemic, sponsorship for children who have lost a parent or breadwinner, or who are suffering economic distress are only a few of the steps taken by the states and union territories.

At the summary conference, Justice Bhat highlighted the following main priorities:

1. Screening, testing, and medical attention for children in institutions.

2. Emergency medications, equipment, and emergency ambulance connectivity, as well as a list of physicians available for tele-consultation.
3. Vaccination of all Day Care Institution employees and other frontline Child Protection professionals.
4. During COVID-19, the nomination of state and district level nodal officers with the authority to make decisions and form a task force for immediate emergency response for children was also highlighted.
5. For orphaned children, a committee composed of the nodal officer (including the DM or SDM), a representative of the concerned CWC, and a representative of the District Legal Service Authority should be formed in each district. This is to ensure that transitional foster homes are available, as well as to collect and protect all records about the deceased parent or parent.

The following are some of the steps taken by the state and union territories, as well as the High Court's Committees:

1. Establishing a state-level nodal officer and a district task force to respond quickly to children in need of treatment and safety during the ongoing pandemic.
2. Sponsorship for children who have lost a parent or whose breadwinner has lost revenue or is experiencing financial difficulty.
3. Preventative measures in day care facilities, as well as preventive attention and care for infants who have contracted the illness.

Aastha Khatwani, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, highlighted the following actions taken by the Ministry in light of the emergency situation:

1. The Ministry has released an advisory to prevent underage adoption and to provide treatment and protection to children who have lost one or both parents to COVID."
2. During COVID-19, the Ministry created transparent, organised, and simple group messaging on children's specific threats, weaknesses, and need for treatment and security.
3. These messages are disseminated and broadcast through social media and other media.