

Ministry of Education issues advisory to States/UTs to ensure RTE entitlements and nutritional support under PM-Poshan to Children with Special Needs

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In a significant step towards realizing the vision of the NEP 2020, the Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education, Government of India, issued a comprehensive advisory to all States and Union Territories (UTs) on 7 June 2024. The advisory emphasizes the need for necessary measures to ensure that all Children with Special Needs (CwSN), studying in government/government-aided inclusive, home-based or special schools are provided with RTE entitlements, such as free uniforms, free textbooks, interventions under the Inclusive Education component of Samagra Shiksha Scheme, and mid-day meal under PM POSHAN, if need be in the form of dry ration or Direct Benefit Transfer.

The issued advisory is a notable move by the Ministry as it specifically addresses the nutritional needs of the CwSN students of Special Schools under the Social Welfare Department and also students with severe and multiple disabilities enrolled in home-based education by extending the coverage of its centrally sponsored PM Poshan scheme; either in the form of dry rations or DBT as the case may be.

The aim is to ensure the NEP 2020 objective of providing access to quality education for all including CwSN thereby realizing their Right to Education and promoting inclusive education.

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasises that the education system must aim to attain equity and inclusion of all children including CwSN as defined under the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The Samagra Shiksha scheme of the Ministry is fully integrated with the objectives of NEP 2020.

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, mandates that all children between the age of 6 and 14 years have the right to free and compulsory education. RTE Entitlements is one of the major interventions across all levels of school education under the Centrally sponsored Samagra Shiksha Scheme. Financial support is provided to States/UTs for these RTE entitlements comprising of free uniforms; free textbooks; reimbursement towards expenditure incurred for 25% of admissions under Section 12 (1) (c), RTE Act, special training for age-appropriate admission of out-of-school children at the elementary level, etc.

The Inclusive Education (IE) component within the Samagra Shiksha program strives to guarantee fair access to high-quality education for CwSN by furnishing them with essential academic assistance and resources. This initiative offers financial assistance to CwSN through targeted interventions, including organizing identification and assessment camps, supplying aids, appliances, and assistive devices, facilitating transportation, providing scribe and escort allowance support, offering Braille

books and large print books, granting stipends for girls with special needs, and providing teaching-learning materials. These efforts aim to effectively cater to their distinctive educational needs within mainstream schools.

Additionally, the Centrally sponsored PM POSHAN scheme provides nutritional support to children from pre-primary to Class VIII of government and government-aided schools.

SS/AK

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