**CHINSURAH SENSE SOCIETY**

Reg. No. S/2L/61582 of 2016-17 Mob. 9830832150 / 8902697500

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 Date: 26/04/2020

To,

The SDO,

Chinsurah Sadar,

Chinsurah, Hooghly.

**Subject: Appeal for dedicated quarantine/isolation facility for children/adults with intellectual disabilities/Autism affected by COVID-19.**

Dear Sir,

We are a group of parents of children and young people with disability, specifically of persons with intellectual disability or Autism or both.

In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic and attendant guidelines for isolation of symptomatic or asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 infection and quarantine of possible contacts of such cases, we would like to draw your attention to the particular problems faced by us as parents or carers and our wards.

The very nature of the difficulties faced by our children/adults, and this includes not only children/adults with intellectual disability and Autism but also children/adults with hearing or visual impairment or deaf-blindness, cerebral palsy, children/adults with mental illness, children/adults with speech and communication impairment, children/adults with chronic severe illnesses, such as, cancer, TB, severe asthma etc. are entirely dependent on us parents or their immediate caregivers, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They cannot function independently and need intense support in their activities of daily living.

Most of these children/adults, and this particularly applies to children/adults with Autism, are extremely sensitive to any changes to their usual routine, their usual physical environment, usual familiar faces and any deviations from this familiarity and constancy can be a source of major psychological upset and severe behaviour problem as well as regression in their development.

Our understanding is that currently cases of COVID-19 and their contacts are being isolated or quarantined in specific designated institutions. These institutions will obviously be alien places to our children/adults with completely unfamiliar sights, sounds, routines and unfamiliar faces. The children/adults will lose touch with their normal familiar structure and routine of life and the challenges to adjust to these sudden profound changes in their life could be overwhelming for them.

We are seriously worried that this arrangement of institutional care of disabled COVID-19 cases or contacts may cause significant harm to our children. On the other hand, we fully understand the serious life and death challenge posed by COVID-19 and fully appreciate the difficult administrative task of keeping everybody safe and limit the spread of the virus in the community.

Taking these facts into consideration, may we humbly suggest, in line with recommendations of the World Health Organization ([Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak](https://www.who.int/internal-publications-detail/disability-considerations-during-the-covid-19-outbreak)) that for disabled children, and particularly for autistic children, in case of COVID-19 infection in the family or for contacts within the family, **that the isolation or quarantine is maintained within the family home if that is at all practicable, in which case parents will obviously do their utmost to abide by all recommended guidelines to maintain the safety and well-being of both the disabled child as well as other members of the family**, because it is in their vital interest to do so. This will avoid the major disruption in the life of the disabled child who has enough other challenges to cope with in his or her life.

**If on the other hand, isolation or quarantine is not practicable within the family home for whatever reason, a dedicated facility could be established, possibly one or more in each district, where along with the parents, specially trained disability friendly staff could be tasked to care for the specially vulnerable children/adults**.

We greatly appreciate all the work you are doing and the enormous task you have of keeping everybody in the community safe and sound and it may be that because disability is not usually a high profile issue, their needs are not often highlighted for special consideration, but not just as parents, but also as concerned citizens we feel that how well we look after the most disadvantaged in our community is the yardstick by which we judge how enlightened we are as a society.

Thanking you,

Yours Truly,

Bratati Choudhury

Secretary

Chinsurah Sense Society