

**Jishnu Barua, IAS**  
Additional Chief Secretary  
Department of Social Welfare  
Government of Assam



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DO.NO.SWD 649/2015/89  
Dated Dispur the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear *Deputy Commissioner,*

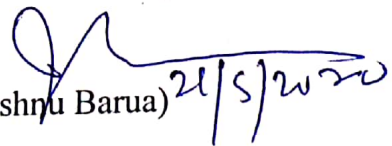
I write this soliciting your personal initiative in the full operationalization of a Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) developed by the Social Welfare Department as a response mechanism to distress calls from women facing abuse and violence while in the confines of their homes during the lockdown period. It is imperative to create an efficient system of delivery of services to women in distress in the light of reports of a sharp rise in the number of crimes reported against women and the apparent lack of clarity among stakeholders on how to deal with distress calls in this period of lockdown.

The SOP has been designed (copy enclosed) with a view to putting in place a clear articulation of responsibilities of various Departments and their agencies and to work out a system of providing support, including shelter, police assistance, psychological counselling, legal assistance etc, to women in need without delay. All this is to be done while ensuring that admissions of women in need are given shelter in various government-run / government funded shelter homes after following due protocol. Adequate provisions have also been included for taking care of reporting and Redressal at various levels.

I would request you to kindly read the SOP carefully and issue instructions to all concerned immediately. You may also initiate further innovative steps beyond the SOP to meet your local requirements. In conclusion, I would urge you to join hands with the Social Welfare Department in its endeavour to create a web of support for women in distress.

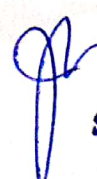
With warm personal regards

Yours sincerely

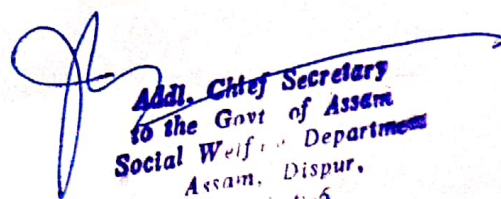
  
(Jishnu Barua) 21/5/2020

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR 181-WHL, OSC AND OTHER HOMES/ CARE INSTITUTIONS RESPONDING TO WOMEN IN DISTRESS DURING LOCKDOWN**

1. 181-WHL Assam will continue to receive, register calls from women facing violence/ abuse or women in any distress and contact other responders including SLSA/ DLSA as per laid down protocol for all landed calls.
2. In the event of requirement of police assistance, 181-WHL will contact the OC of the Police Station (PS) concerned and seek assistance and the OC of the PS shall provide immediate assistance as may be required without delay. Should the OC not respond to calls the 181-WHL shall contact the DSP (Hqrs) and keep escalating the issue to higher authorities in the district like the Addl SP and the SP, till action is initiated. To facilitate such contact, Home and Political Department shall instruct the concerned office to provide district wise telephone numbers of OCs/ 2nd Officers of the PS, DSP (Hqrs), Addl SP (Hqrs) and the SP to the 181-WHL. Home and Political Department will also arrange sharing of details of all Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) and Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs) with 181-WHL.
3. Once other formalities are complete the woman requiring shelter must screening for COVID-19 using the services of 104/ any health institution of the Health and Family Welfare Department. The responsibility of connecting with 104/ any health institution of the Health and Family Welfare Department for this purpose shall lie with 181-WHL.
4. In case difficulties arise in making arrangements for such screening, 181-WHL will inform the District Social Welfare Officer and simultaneously escalate the issue to the ADC in charge of Social Welfare in the district. The ADC will contact the Health Department and ensure that screening is done expeditiously. If further escalation is required in the estimation of the ADC, the DC shall be informed who will take appropriate action.
5. 181-WHL will establish communication with the Women Cell in the State CID office on a fortnightly basis and share with CID all information about cases of crime against women that have been registered during that period.
6. One Stop Centres shall provide 181-WHL information about availability of beds in their Centres on a daily basis as per format enclosed as Annexure I. The report must reach the 181-WHL, with a copy to the DSWO, via email at 3.00 pm every day, including holidays. This will enable the latter to understand the availability position and take a considered view on planning accommodation for women in need.
7. Similar status reports in format at Annexure I shall be prepared by the management of Swadhar Grehs, Ujjwala Homes and Shelter Homes and furnished via email to 181-WHL with a copy to the DSWO of the district every day so as to reach the 181-WHL by 3.00 pm.
8. The SCPS shall obtain information on availability of accommodation in Institutions registered under the JJ Act on a daily basis as per format at Annexure I and share that information with 181-WHL by 3.00 pm every day.

  
**Addl. Chief Secretary**  
**to the Govt of Assam**  
**Social Welfare Department**  
Assam, Dispur,  
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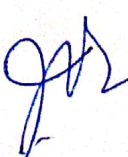
9. 181-WHL shall develop a software application to obtain information about availability of beds from OSCs, Swadhar Grehs, Ujjwala Homes, and Shelter Homes etc within one month and share the application with all concerned.
10. Management of OSCs shall not have the liberty to deny accommodation in the OSC as per request of 181-WHL if beds are available and if screening of the woman concerned has been done. All OSCs shall have the exact number of beds and manpower as per guidelines.
11. Management of Swadhar Grehs, Shelter Homes, Destitute Homes and Ujjwala Homes shall also, in case of exigency when accommodation facilities in OSCs are not available, comply with requests from 181-WHL for accommodation of women in distress subject to such women having undergone screening for COVID -19 symptoms. Any refusal shall be brought to the notice of the DSWO and the ADC in charge Social Welfare by 181-WHL who will recommend appropriate administrative action against defaulters.
12. To the extent possible, new admissions shall be kept in isolation in the shelter home as per protocol. In the event of development of COVID-19 symptoms by any of the residents, the authority concerned shall immediately contact 104/Medical Helpline. 181-WHL, DSWO and the ADC in charge Social Welfare shall be informed about such development.
13. In case of SOS calls from women who are later found to have mental health issues, 181-WHL shall receive and register the calls, contact the PS, inform the DSWO and the ADC in Charge and also contact the management of Homes for person with mental health issues to provide accommodation. The management of homes for persons with mental health issues shall mandatorily provide accommodation to women in distress. Any refusal to provide accommodation despite availability shall be brought to the notice of the DSWO and the ADC in charge Social Welfare by 181-WHL who, in turn, will recommend appropriate administrative action against defaulters.
14. While dealing with cases of women in distress or suffering from violence against them, the safety of children of such women needs to be ensured as well. As per section 14 sub section (iii) clause (a) and section (iv) of JJ (CPC) Act 2015, a child may be considered as CNCP if they reside with a guardian or any such person who has violated a law for protection of children and the Committee / the board finds parents or guardian to be unfit to protect the safety and well being of the child. In such a situation WHL will refer the children to CHILDLINE and CWC for appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the children.
15. In case of a call from a woman who has children or from a woman below 18 years of age, 181-WHL will immediately refer the case (s) to CWC / Childline / CWPO / DCPU, who would in turn ensure the safety of the children in the spirit of JJ (CPC) Act 2015.
16. Information regarding the support provided by 181-WHL-Assam and other support systems available for women in distress facing abuse and violence at home must be disseminated widely across the media, both print and electronic and through digital platforms.

  
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### Critical Resources:

The following entities are critical resources for the operationalization of this SOP and without their support the task of ensuring protection and safety of women will not be possible. Each entity will take steps necessary towards ensuring that women in distress are not left to fend for themselves and that all appropriate remedies and support are made available to them without hindrance or delay.

1. **Social Welfare Department Assam:-** To offer policy direction, to issue guidelines/ instructions, to monitor working of the SOP, resolve problems when reported etc.
2. **Home and Political Department through its officials in the District (Superintendents of Police and the Officers –in – Charge of the Police Stations, the Directorate of Prosecution etc:-** To provide support in rescue / evacuation of women in distress as and when required by and requested by the first responder i.e. 181-WHL, to provide support in expeditious investigation and prosecution etc and seek to put in place an Investigative Unit for Crimes against Women (IUCW) in every district over a period of time. In the interim Home Department to study the feasibility of notifying one dedicated officer in each PS in the state who would be contacted by the first responder, i.e. 181-WHL, whenever police assistance is necessary. Department to also share details of all Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) and Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs) with 181-WHL.
3. **Health and Family Welfare Department and its agencies including 104 and 108:-**To provide medical support through its health institutions, to provide support of counsellors/ psychiatrists, ambulance support, medical examination, first aid, treatment and support in screening distressed women for symptoms for COVID -19 as and when required and for their quarantine etc, should such need arise.
4. **The Directorate of Social Welfare:-** To implement the SOP, to coordinate with all stakeholders and to create a mechanism for information sharing among all concerned, to ensure wide publicity of all government welfare and protection schemes in place, to cause publicity of the Cyber Crime portal and 181-WHL, to monitor the role and responsibilities of the District Social Welfare Officers etc in the full and effective implementation of the SOP.
5. **Deputy Commissioner of the district, including the Additional Deputy Commissioner handling Social Welfare Department matters :-**To review the functioning of the OSCs and the Homes/ Shelters at regular intervals, to intervene and resolve critical issues that may emerge, to release funds to the OSCs etc as per instructions of the government as part of the endeavour to ensure effective services in the OSCs, to furnish UCs expeditiously etc
6. **State Resource Centre for Women:-** To provide support to the NGOs, Government Departments and all stakeholders including Mahila Shakti Kendras/ BBBP staff, Block Level Student Volunteers etc
7. **The State Legal Services Authority:-** To notify and share information with 181-WHL and the OSCs regarding a nodal officer in each district and good lawyers whose services are available for women in distress pro bono, to consider defraying any clerical charges that such lawyers may incur during the course of the trial, to consider incentivizing lawyers who can bring

  
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results in favour of distressed women by creating a wall of fame and placing their names there or by public acknowledgement of their services etc

8. **State Child Protection Society:-** To collate information pertaining to availability of accommodation from the Institutions registered under the JJ Act (registered CCI) and share such information with 181-WHL on a daily basis. To also share with 181-WHL the contact details of all CWC, District Child Protection Units (DCPU) in 33 Districts, along with details of CHILDLINE and the districts they cover.
9. **Child Welfare Committee (CWC) :**To respond timely and efficiently to respond to any calls from 181-Women Helpline, Childline, CWPO and DCPU to ensure appropriate action in the best interest of the children and ensuring the safety of children.
10. **The management of all institutions like Shelter Homes, Destitute Homes, Swadhar Grehs, Ujjwala Homes, both governmental and private, that are run by/ receive funding from government:-** To assist women in distress by providing logistical support and accommodation as and when referred to by 181-WHL
11. **NGO that is managing 181-WHL Assam and its staff:-** To respond efficiently and effectively as the first responder to any distress call made by a woman, to take steps for registration of cases, to connect to all agencies like the local PS/ 104/ 108/ health institution authorities/ legal service authorities/ counsellors as may be required in their estimation as per guidelines, etc.
12. **NGOs running OSCs in the districts and their staff: -**To assist women in distress by providing logistical support as and when referred to by 181-WHL etc

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