



## Free Legal Aid

**For Prelims:** National Legal Service Day, NALSA.

**For Mains:** Free Legal aid, Related constitutional provisions and laws.

### Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Law and Justice informed Lok Sabha about the Pan India Legal Awareness and Outreach Campaign, which was launched in October 2021 on the occasion of [National Legal Service Day \(NLSD\)](#).

- The **NLSD** is celebrated on **9<sup>th</sup> November every year to spread awareness for ensuring reasonable fair and justice procedure** for all citizens.

### What is NLSD and Related Constitutional Provisions?

- **About:**
  - NLSD was first started by the [Supreme Court of India](#) in 1995 to provide help and support to poor and weaker sections of the society.
  - Free legal services are provided in matters before Civil, Criminal and Revenue Courts, Tribunals or any other authority exercising judicial or quasi judicial functions.
  - It is **observed to make the citizens of the country aware of the various provisions under the Legal Services Authorities Act** and the rights of the litigants. On this day, each jurisdiction organizes legal aid camps, Lok adalats, and legal aid programmes.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides** that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
  - **Articles 14 and 22(1) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law** and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.

### What are the Objectives of Legal Service Authorities?

- Provide free legal aid and advice.
- Spread legal awareness.
- Organize [lok adalats](#).
- Promote settlements of disputes through [Alternative Dispute Resolution \(ADR\)](#) Mechanisms. Various kinds of ADR mechanisms are Arbitration, Conciliation, Judicial settlement including settlement through Lok Adalat, or Mediation.
- Provide compensation to victims of crime.

## What are the Institutions for providing Free Legal Services?

- **National Level:**
  - National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). It was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.
- **State Level:**
  - State Legal Services Authority. It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief.
- **District Level:**
  - District Legal Services Authority. The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
- **Taluka/Sub-Division Level:**
  - Taluka/Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee. It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.
- **High Court:** High Court Legal Services Committee
- **Supreme Court:** Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.

## Who is Eligible for Getting Free Legal Services?

- Women and children
- Members of SC/ST
- Industrial workmen
- Victims of mass disaster, violence, flood, drought, earthquake, industrial disaster.
- Disabled persons
- Persons in custody
- Those persons who have annual income of less than the amount prescribed by the respective State Government, if the case is before any court other than the Supreme Court, and less than Rs. 5 Lakhs, if the case is before the Supreme Court.
- Victims of Trafficking in Human beings or begar.

**Source: PIB**

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