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Civic department for welfare of disabled mooted

PUNE: If all goes as planned by the commissionerate of persons with disabilities in the city, 22 municipal corporations in the state, including Pune, may soon have a separate department for the welfare of persons with disabilities (PwD).

The commissionerate has proposed to create an independent wing (like other departments in municipal corporations) in civic bodies in the state, which will work towards the inclusion of [disabled](#)

persons in the main-stream, apart from providing them with educational, medical, social and financial support and rehabilitation.

Bajirao Jadhav, state commissioner for persons with

disabilities, said, "We are planning a meeting with the commissioners of municipal corporations in the state. The civic bodies have various departments working in different areas such as health, construction, water and the like. A separate department which will look after the welfare of all the disabled in the civic body's jurisdiction is also being considered."

The wing, which was first created by the [Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation](#)

(NMMC), will also help the civic bodies in implementing the mandatory 3% fund reservation from the actual budget for the uplift of people suffering from disabilities.

Though the official paperwork and other modalities of the initiative are yet to come through, the commissionerate has been discussing with the NMMC authorities about implementation of the initiative. The separate wing in NMMC was created in 2007, and came to be known as the 'education, training and service centre for persons with different abilities' (ETC).

Varsha Bhagat, director, ETC, said, "It is mandatory for civic bodies to reserve 3% of their actual budget for the welfare of differently-abled. ETC helps them in spending this reserved

fund on the target beneficiaries. The department concentrates on [special education](#) for those with all disabilities - hearing impaired, mentally challenged, learning disabled, [autism](#) and those with multiple disabilities - in Marathi, English and Hindi mediums."

Bhagat said the department provides special education to special children studying in regular schools-public and private. "We have separate curriculums for each such child, based on CBSE, ICSE and SSC patterns. The curriculum style is designed according to the capacity of each child, but the content remains the same," she said.

Apart from education, the department also provides physiotherapy, [occupational therapy](#), speech therapy, auditory training therapy, psychotherapy, etc, to PwD. "Another area that the wing works in is providing various schemes for PwD, such as cochlear implant surgery for the hearing impaired, financial support for self-employment, free aids and appliances for the disabled, stipend for parents of the disabled, financial support for medical treatment, and the like," she added.

Another area that the department works on is prevention of disability and awareness in the society. "We focus on primary prevention awareness, secondary prevention awareness and tertiary prevention awareness. The separate wing will thus be a one-stop resource centre for disabled people, catering to not only the prevention of disabilities but also the rehabilitation," said Bhagat, adding that the department also focuses on training school and mobile school teachers on handling special children studying in regular class-rooms.

"Municipal corporations in the state that want to replicate ETC can select all areas or combination areas to be replicated," she said, adding that mayor of NMMC Sagar Naik, guardian minister [Ganesh Naik](#) and NMMC commissioner Bhaskar Wankhede have been involved in the activities. Wankhede said NMMC authorities were holding discussions with the state commissioner for disabled on replication of the model across the state.