5. TASKS OF THE STATE CARE OF THE DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA*

The problem of disability was in the spotlight in all societies. Armenia has been distinguished by providing care for disabled, unable, poor people in its centuries-old history. They were always under the care of Armenian Apostolic Church. There are numerous miniatures on the disabled people in the handwritten chronicles.

One of the tasks of the state is to integrate the disabled people into the society, making them able to work and solve own problems without assistance; then to adapt the environment for needs of the disabled people, upon which in case of impossibility of ensuring these both, to turn to the passive methods for social protection of the disabled people.

Social protection issues of the disabled people in the Republic of Armenia are regulated by the RA Law “On Social Protection of the Disabled People in the Republic of Armenia” and a number of the Government Decrees of RA. While preparing the legislative statements, which ensure the legislative regulation of relations in this sphere, the Government of the Republic of Armenia is also guided by the international standards, particularly UN’s Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which were adopted during the 48th session by the UN General Assembly.

The law defines the legal, economic and organizational principles of the social protection of the disabled people; directions for the state policy of providing the disabled people with more favourable conditions and privileges, which enable them to exercise their rights and abilities, so ensuring the same chances for them as other citizens of the republic have.

According to this law, reason for disability could be illness from childhood, general illness, occupational injury, professional illness, natural, man-caused and other calamities, as well as illness or injury taken during the activities on averting those calamities, illness or injury taken during the activities averting the accident in Chernobil Nuclear Electric Power Station and other radiation calamities, illness taken during the Great Patriotic War and crucially important tasks in other states, illness or injury taken during the defence of the Republic of Armenia, illness or injury taken during the military services, illness or injury taken during the military duties, and other cases foreseen by the legislation.

The person recognised as disabled in the medical and social experience is given Disability Group (Groups I, II and III), and the children under 18 years of age – status of disabled child.

Disability is determined with or without time limit given by the availability of respective prescriptions.

The disabled people are provided with the free qualitative medical aid in the state medical institutions at the expense of state budget.

The disabled people of the Group I and Group II and the disabled children should be provided with the free medicines by the prescription, and the disabled people of the Group III - at 50% discount, if they don’t use the right for receiving the medicines in the more privileged terms.

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* The analysis is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues of RA
The disabled people of the Group I and Group II and the persons, who have a status of the disabled child are admitted to secondary and/or higher vocational education institution without any condition, in case they pass entrance exams with positive marks.

There are schools in the general education system in Armenia for the children with special needs, particularly for the children with visual, hearing, mobility impairments and intellectual disabilities.

Tuition fees for the persons with disabilities admitted to the state higher and/or secondary vocational educational institutions are financed from the state budget. Among them, stipendia is given to the persons with disabilities of daytime education, if they pass their regular exams and tests with positive marks.

It is inadmissible to refuse signing a working contract with the disabled people or their promotion due to disability.

Employer is not allowed to dismiss people getting medical, vocational and social rehabilitation in the relevant institutions.

The disabled people could be involved in the overtime, nonworking or night work only with their consent.

Short working hours – no more than 36 hours per week are determined for disabled people, which belong to the disability groups I and II.

There is no probation period for the disabled people, when they are taken on work. While reduction of the number of employees or staff, the disabled people have privileges to stay in their position in case of the equal work productivity and the same qualification.

The public authorities of the Republic of Armenia and government bodies, all the employers working in the territory of the Republic of Armenia should provide all conditions for the persons with disabilities, enabling them to have access to social infrastructure units, dwellings, public and production buildings, to use public transport, communication and information means, places for rest and entertainment without difficulties.

The families with the disabled people of the Group I and Group II have a right to set up telephones and the disabled people – special-constructed telephones out of order and free of charge according to the order established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. {XE "䍄Suppress"}

The disabled persons of the Group I and Group II, as well as children with disabilities from childhood receive payment for trip by all the urban, suburban and interurban passenger transport means, regardless types of property (excluding taxi) in the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

The disabled people have a right to order, repair and receive special prosthetic and orthopaedic shoes and all kinds of prosthetic appliances (excluding dentures from the precious metals) free of charge.

The disabled people and the persons representing them can create public organizations for protecting their interests and rights, providing mutual assistance and services.

Provision of rehabilitation devices is also among the several social guarantees, which are determined for the disabled people by the RA Law “On Social Protection of the Disabled People of the Republic of Armenia”. The disabled people are provided with the prostheses for upper and lower
extremities, different orthoses, wheelchairs, hearing devices, crutches, sticks and other means in the republic.

Two institutions “Prosthesis and Personnel Training CJSC” and “Prosthesis and Orthopaedic CJSC” functioning in the republic serve this purpose. These two institutions supply and repair prosthesis for the disabled people. “Prosthesis and Personnel Training CJSC” has a branch office in Gyumri, which serves the disabled people in that region, and “Prosthesis and Orthopaedic CJSC” provides general field services. The latter provides the disabled people also with rehabilitation appliances. Both institutions have prosthesis repair workshop. 437.0, 281.0, 395.5 and 395.5 million drams have been allocated from the state budget for 2000-2003 accordingly.

Activities are carried out to improve the affordability and accessibility for the disabled people to the premises and buildings in the republic. During the reconstruction of roads in 2003 funded by the Lincy Foundation, wheelchair-accessible pavements were constructed in Yerevan, to make travelling easier for the disabled people.

The biggest state program of the social assistance operating in Armenia is the Family Poverty Benefit. Benefit is granted given by the degree of family vulnerability.

The system for estimating vulnerability of family in RA is based on the indicators on social status of every family member. By the way, the social groups in this system are estimated at 50 scores at most. The three disability groups and the disabled children have different scores: Disability Group I - 48, Disability Group II - 39, Disability Group III - 28, disabled child – 45. The probability of receiving the family benefit for vulnerability of the given family is as strong as disability group is high.

The 42609 disabled people were included in the system of Poverty Family Benefit in 2003.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that there are special institutions taking care for only the disabled people in Armenia. They are the Children’s Home in Gyumri, which is foreseen for the disabled children under 5 years with mental abnormalities, the Specialized Children’s Home in Nor Kharberd for the disabled children from 5-18 years of age with intellectual disabilities, as well as the Boarding-home for the Adult Disabled People in Gyumri foreseen for the disabled people with non-mental disorders and the Neurological and Psychiatric Boarding-Home in Vardenis.