

Now, a directory of services for the elderly

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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DAY-care centres with counselling, health, diet, nutrition and legal advice for senior citizens are depressingly few — only two — in the huge metropolis of Mumbai, a non-governmental organisation has discovered. Considering the increasing number of elderly citizens and then perusing the NGO's survey results, the services provided by the city are abysmal. However, at least the information on where these organisations are located is now answered in a comprehensive directory compiled by the Family Welfare Agency (FWA), which was released last week.

Being sold by the FWA for a nominal Rs 50, it outlines the names and addresses of 205 organisations in the city offering services



for senior citizens. The nuggets of information are interesting. For example, of the 11 residential centres and two day-care centres, around 73.6 per cent of these homes — eight in number — are in the city, especially in E Ward, which has six. There is almost nothing in the north of the city, but what abounds instead are neighbourhood associations of senior citizens (45 in number) or associations of

retired persons (12 in number), a whopping 80 per cent of which are in the suburbs.

"Yes, the crux of the problem is an absence of multi service centres for senior citizens, where people want to get together, discuss their problems and seek solutions," said Alpa Desai, senior social worker with the FWA. Right now, the number of day care centres is two, one run by the agency and the other by Manav

Seva Sangh at Sion. "Multi service centres are the newest things one needs in the city. Such centres, like ours, provide a range of services, from getting documents for senior citizens to avail of old-age pensions to counselling them for recreation, health, diet and nutrition, training and giving legal advice," said Desai.

Their organisation, which works primarily with the underprivileged elderly, has even had to file cases for maintenance in family courts.

Their research, conducted through an outreach programme, shows that the city has several associations of retired or senior citizens, which though important, don't do anything for their cause besides recreation. "For instance, for a senior citizen suffering from Alzheimer's, when the family is unable to take care of

them, there is no institute willing to take on such patients," said Desai. The directory, which has names of institutions that responded to FWA's research, was born of a project on net-working with other organisations that FWA took up two years back. According to this directory, there are eight nodal agencies in the city providing the entire range of services for the elderly.

The directory lists out not only the agencies working for the elderly, but also the allied services provided, like hospitals, cancer check-up cells, blood banks and legal aid centres. Besides detailed addresses and phone numbers of the organisations, the directory has maps of wards showing where the services are located.

(Contact the FWA, near BDD Chawl No 10, N M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (W). Tel: 3082085.)

TODAY'S ENGAGEMENTS

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