

WOMEN'S CHARTER
(CHAPTER 353, SECTION 180(1))

WOMEN'S CHARTER (PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND
GIRLS) RULES

ARRANGEMENT OF RULES

Rule

1. Citation
2. Definitions

PART I

BOARD OF VISITORS

3. Composition of Board
4. Tenure of office
5. Duty of Board
6. Visits to places of safety
7. Chairman of Board
8. Deputy Chairman of Board
9. Secretary to Board
10. Cessation of appointment
11. Vacancies in Board
12. Quorum
13. Resolutions
14. Meetings

PART II

DISCHARGE COMMITTEE

15. Discharge or place on parole licence girls in place of safety
16. Director-General may consult Discharge Committee
17. Composition of Discharge Committee
18. Aftercare
19. Girls released on parole licence
20. Functions of Discharge Committee

PART III

ADMINISTRATION OF PLACES OF SAFETY

21. Maximum number of residents

Rule

22. Responsibilities of superintendent
23. Records to be kept by superintendent
24. Administrative programmes, schedules, etc.
25. Leave of absence of superintendent
26. Bed
27. Clothing
28. Food
29. Daily routine
30. Copy of daily routine
31. Deviation from routine to be entered in log book
32. Education
33. Time-table and syllabus to be approved
34. Practical training
35. Registers
36. Purpose of practical training
37. Recreation
38. Girls below 12 years
39. Religious instruction
40. Leisure activities
41. Excursions
42. Home visits
43. Correspondence with parents or guardians
44. Receipt of letters
45. Visits from relatives
46. Payment for work done
47. Discipline
48. Privileges
49. Punishments
50. Discipline without corporal punishment to be the aim
51. Corporal punishment
52. Record of punishment
53. Staff forbidden to inflict corporal punishment
54. No resident to punish another
55. Medical Officers
56. Medical Officers to attend Board meetings
57. Dental Officers
58. Director-General to inform parents or guardian of admission of girl
59. Procedure when girl absent
60. Reports of death and other serious events

Rule

61. Procedure when girl hospitalised
 62. Healthcare professionals and mental capacity assessors under section 160A of Act
 63. Keeping of registers, information, etc.
 64. Copy of Rules to be given to all persons involved
 65. Places of safety to be open for inspection
 66. Internal administration
 67. Director-General to attend Board meetings
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[1st July 1974]

Citation

1. These Rules may be cited as the Women's Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) Rules.

Definitions

2. In these Rules —

“Board” means a Board of Visitors appointed by the Minister under section 178 of the Act;

“Chairman” means the Chairman of the Board;

“Dental Officer” means a Dental Officer appointed under rule 57;

“Deputy Chairman” means the Deputy Chairman of the Board;

“Medical Officer” means a Medical Officer appointed under rule 55;

“paramedic” includes —

(a) a member of the Singapore Civil Defence Force raised and maintained under the Civil Defence Act 1986 who is a paramedic;

(b) an ambulance paramedic as defined by regulation 9(8) of the Healthcare Services (Emergency Ambulance Service and Medical

Transport Service) Regulations 2022 (G.N. No. S 2/2022); and

- (c) an emergency medical technician as defined by regulation 9(8) of the Healthcare Services (Emergency Ambulance Service and Medical Transport Service) Regulations 2022;

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

“psychiatrist” means a medical practitioner who is registered as a psychiatrist in the Register of Specialists under the Medical Registration Act 1997;

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

“registered dentist” means a person registered as a fully registered dentist under section 14(1) or (2) of the Dental Registration Act 1999;

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

“registered medical practitioner” has the meaning given by section 2(1) of the Medical Registration Act 1997;

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

“registered nurse” has the meaning given by section 2 of the Nurses and Midwives Act 1999;

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

“superintendent” means a person appointed to be in charge of a place of safety.

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

PART I

BOARD OF VISITORS

Composition of Board

3.—(1) The Board shall consist of such number of persons as the Minister may determine.

(2) The Minister may at any time revoke the appointment of any member of the Board.

Tenure of office

4. Every member of the Board shall hold office for a period of not more than 2 years from the date of his appointment and shall be eligible for reappointment on completion of that period unless he resigns during his period of office or unless his appointment is revoked by the Minister under rule 3(2).

Duty of Board

5.—(1) Members of the Board shall satisfy themselves that the health, maintenance, recreation, discipline, training and education of the girls in places of safety are satisfactory and that an efficient standard is maintained throughout each place of safety but shall not be concerned with the general administrative matters of the places of safety.

(2) Members of the Board shall send their comments and recommendations regarding the places of safety to the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Visits to places of safety

6. Not less than 2 members of the Board shall visit each place of safety in respect of which they are appointed at least once a month.

Chairman of Board

7.—(1) The Chairman shall be appointed by the Minister from amongst the members of the Board.

(2) The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Board.

Deputy Chairman of Board

8.—(1) A Deputy Chairman shall be elected by the Board from amongst its members.

(2) The Deputy Chairman may, in the absence of the Chairman, preside at meetings of the Board and when so doing shall exercise all the powers and functions of the Chairman.

Secretary to Board

- 9.—(1) The Chairman shall appoint a Secretary to the Board.
- (2) The Secretary shall not be a member of the Board and shall not be entitled to vote at a meeting of the Board.

Cessation of appointment

10. A person appointed as a member of the Board shall cease to hold such appointment —

- (a) on his death, resignation or absence from Singapore for more than 3 months without the prior permission of the Minister; or
- (b) if the Minister revokes the appointment.

Vacancies in Board

11.—(1) A vacancy occurring in the Board shall be filled by a fresh appointment made by the Minister, and the person appointed to fill such vacancy shall hold office for so long as the member in whose place he is appointed would have held office.

(2) The Board shall not be incapable of acting by reason only of there being any vacancy in the membership of the Board.

Quorum

12.—(1) The quorum at every meeting of the Board shall be half the total number of members of the Board, and shall include the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman.

(2) No business shall be transacted or discussed at a meeting of the Board unless a quorum is present.

Resolutions

13. Resolutions at any meeting of the Board shall be passed by a majority of votes and in the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman, presiding at the meeting, shall have a second or casting vote.

Meetings

14.—(1) Meetings of the Board shall be called by the Chairman or the Secretary of the Board as and when necessary but in any case at intervals not exceeding 3 months.

(2) A meeting of the Board shall be called upon the requisition in writing of not less than 3 members of the Board.

(3) At least 7 days' notice in writing shall be given of meetings of the Board and the notice convening the meeting shall include the agenda for such meeting.

(4) The Secretary shall keep the minutes of every meeting and a copy of the minutes shall be sent to all members of the Board as soon as possible after each meeting.

(5) The minutes shall be confirmed at the next following meeting of the Board and when confirmed shall be signed by the Chairman, or the Deputy Chairman, presiding at that meeting.

PART II

DISCHARGE COMMITTEE

Discharge or place on parole licence girls in place of safety

15.—(1) It shall be the duty of the Director-General to discharge or place on parole licence each girl detained in a place of safety as soon as she has made sufficient progress in her training.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) With this object in view, the Director-General shall at the end of the first 6 months during which the girl is detained in a place of safety or at such earlier time as he considers necessary, review the progress made by the girl, and all the circumstances of the case including the girl's home surroundings.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(3) The Director-General shall review the progress and circumstances as often as may be necessary and at least every 6 months.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(4) The Director-General shall, for this purpose, require the superintendent of the place of safety concerned and an aftercare officer to submit in writing a report relating to the progress, behaviour and other relevant matters pertaining to such girl for the period under review.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Director-General may consult Discharge Committee

16.—(1) In considering his review of cases, the Director-General may forward the relevant records of the case to the Discharge Committee established under section 179(1) of the Act, and may obtain its advice as to whether any girl detained in a place of safety should be released on parole licence.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) Where there is reason to believe that a girl can be placed out during the first 6 months of stay, the case shall be reported by the superintendent to the Director-General with a view to his consent being obtained.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Composition of Discharge Committee

17.—(1) The Discharge Committee shall consist of such number of members as the Minister may determine. Among the members to be appointed, one shall be a nominee of the Director-General of Social Welfare.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) The Discharge Committee shall elect a chairman and a deputy chairman from amongst its members and the chairman shall ordinarily preside at all of the Committee meetings.

(3) The secretary of the Discharge Committee shall be appointed by the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(4) Members of the Discharge Committee shall hold office for a period of not more than 2 years from the date of their respective appointment and may be eligible for reappointment on completion of that period.

(5) The Minister may at any time revoke the appointment of a member of the Discharge Committee.

(6) If any vacancy occurs by death, resignation or otherwise, a new member shall be appointed by the Minister, and any person appointed to fill the vacancy shall hold office for so long as the person in whose place he is appointed would have held office.

(7) The quorum at all meetings of the Discharge Committee shall be 3 members present, in addition to the chairman or the deputy chairman, and no business shall be transacted or discussed unless a quorum is present.

(8) The superintendent of the approved school or home concerned and the aftercare officer shall be available at all meetings of the Discharge Committee.

(9) In its review of cases, the Discharge Committee shall consider the reports submitted by the superintendent and the aftercare officer.

(10) No member of the Discharge Committee shall visit or interview the parents, guardian, siblings or any other member of the family of, or the home of, any girl under review without the prior approval of the Committee.

Aftercare

18.—(1) The Discharge Committee shall ensure that every effort is made by the aftercare officer to obtain suitable employment for a girl who is fit for discharge or release on parole licence.

(2) For this purpose the Discharge Committee shall avail itself, where necessary, of any help that can be obtained whether from public organisations or private individuals.

(3) Where the girl's home conditions are reported by the aftercare officer to be unsatisfactory, the Discharge Committee may recommend that she be placed in a hostel or other suitable lodgings.

(4) Where a girl is being discharged or released on parole licence from a place of safety, the Director-General shall inform the parents

or guardian, if any, of the girl in advance of the date of her discharge or release on parole licence.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Girls released on parole licence

19.—(1) The Discharge Committee shall satisfy itself that adequate arrangements are made for the aftercare of every girl released on parole licence from a place of safety for a minimum period of one year or until she attains the age of 21 years, whichever is the earlier.

(2) It shall be the duty of the aftercare officer to report on the progress of every girl released on parole licence under her care at such intervals as the Discharge Committee may determine.

(3) Where it is in the interest of the girl released on parole licence, to have her recalled to a place of safety, it shall be the duty of the Discharge Committee to advise the Director-General to revoke the licence issued.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(4) Notwithstanding paragraph (3), the Director-General shall have power, in case of urgency, to recall to the place of safety any girl who is released on parole licence.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Functions of Discharge Committee

20.—(1) The Discharge Committee shall have a purely advisory function in reviewing cases and making recommendation to the Director-General, on the discharge and aftercare of girls in places of safety.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) No decision of the Discharge Committee shall be binding on the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

PART III

ADMINISTRATION OF PLACES OF SAFETY

Maximum number of residents

21. The total number of girls resident in each place of safety at any time, whether sent to such place of safety under the provisions of the Act or otherwise, shall not exceed such number as may be fixed for each place of safety from time to time by the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Responsibilities of superintendent

22. The superintendent shall be responsible to the Director-General for the efficient management of the place of safety under her charge and for the discipline, training and welfare of the residents therein.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Records to be kept by superintendent

23.—(1) The superintendent shall keep —

- (a) a visitors book in which the names of the members of the Board shall be entered and in which they may make remarks concerning the place of safety;
- (b) a register of admission and discharges in which shall be recorded all admissions to and discharges from, the place of safety;
- (c) a log book in which shall be entered every event of importance connected with the place of safety;
- (d) a daily register of the presence or the absence of each girl in the place of safety; and
- (e) a punishment book.

(2) Such books and registers shall be available for inspection by members of the Board at all times and shall be signed by them on inspection.

(3) They shall also be laid before the Board at every meeting of the Board if the Board so requires.

Administrative programmes, schedules, etc.

24. The superintendent shall, with the approval of the Director-General, determine and draw up the following:

- (a) duties of other members of the staff of the place of safety under her charge;
- (b) the programmes for recreation, training and education, welfare and other activities in the place of safety under her charge;
- (c) fire precautions and fire drill orders on the advice of the Commissioner of Civil Defence; and
- (d) such other duties, programmes, schedules, or like matters as the Director-General may from time to time determine.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Leave of absence of superintendent

25. The superintendent shall, before leaving the place of safety for a period of more than 24 hours, designate another member of the staff of the place of safety to carry out the duties of the superintendent in her absence.

Bed

26. Every girl in a place of safety shall be provided with a separate bed.

Clothing

27. Every girl in a place of safety shall be supplied with her own set of clothing and such other personal effects as may be necessary for her stay in the place of safety.

Food

28.—(1) Every girl in a place of safety shall be supplied with food that is based on the recommendation of a dietician.

(2) Every recommendation referred to in paragraph (1) and every amendment made to the recommendation shall be subject to the approval of the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Daily routine

29. The daily routine of each place of safety, including the hours of rising and retiring, school-room instruction, practical training, domestic work, meals and recreation, shall be in accordance with a scheme approved from time to time by the Director-General who may consult the Board in this regard.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Copy of daily routine

30. A copy of the daily routine shall be kept posted in a conspicuous place in each place of safety.

Deviation from routine to be entered in log book

31. Any substantial deviation from the daily routine shall be entered in the log book and a report, together with the reasons for such deviation, shall be sent forthwith to the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Education

32. The education given in each place of safety shall be based on principles agreed between the Ministry of Education and the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Time-table and syllabus to be approved

33.—(1) The school-room time-table and syllabus shall be subject to approval by the Director-General in consultation with the Ministry of Education.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) A copy of the time-table shall be kept posted in the school-room.

Practical training

34. The practical training of all girls in a place of safety shall be in accordance with a scheme approved from time to time by the Director-General in consultation with the Ministry of Education and the Board.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Registers

35. The attendance of girls in the place of safety in the school-room and at all classes of practical training shall be recorded in registers.

Purpose of practical training

36.—(1) The practical training given to girls above the age of 14 years in a place of safety shall, in so far as is practicable, be directed towards preparing them for some form of employment.

(2) Regard shall be had to the capacity, aptitude and preference of each girl, and in all suitable cases the parents or guardian of the girl shall be consulted.

Recreation

37. No girl in a place of safety shall be employed in work in the place of safety in such a way as to impair her capacity to profit by education or instruction or to deprive her of reasonable recreation or leisure.

Girls below 12 years

38. Girls below the age of 12 years in a place of safety shall not be employed except in light work such as making their own beds or cleaning their own dormitories or assisting in the kitchen or in similar light work in or about the building or grounds of the place of safety.

Religious instruction

39.—(1) So far as practicable, arrangements shall be made for the religious instruction of girls in a place of safety according to their own religious persuasion.

(2) Ministers of religion shall be given access to every place of safety for the purpose of visits or for giving religious instruction to girls of their particular faith.

Leisure activities

40.—(1) Adequate provision shall be made in the place of safety for free time and recreation, including organised games, walks and visits.

(2) Except in bad weather, at least one hour daily shall be spent by the girls in the place of safety in the open air.

Excursions

41. The superintendent may from time to time organise any excursion for the girls in the place of safety.

Home visits

42.—(1) Every girl in a place of safety shall be granted leave to visit her own home every year unless circumstances make it undesirable, but the period of such leave shall not exceed 14 days in any year, without the authority of the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) Where circumstances make it undesirable for a girl to stay at her own home for the leave period, the superintendent may, with the approval of the Director-General, make such other arrangements as are considered suitable.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Correspondence with parents or guardians

43.—(1) Girls in a place of safety shall be encouraged to write to their parents or guardians, or, if unable to write, to dictate such a letter to a member of the staff, at least once a month.

(2) For this purpose, postage shall be provided, where necessary, by the superintendent.

Receipt of letters

44. Girls in a place of safety shall be allowed to receive letters from their parents, guardians, relatives and friends.

Visits from relatives

45. Girls in a place of safety shall be allowed to receive visits from their parents or guardians, relatives and friends at such reasonable intervals as the superintendent may determine.

Payment for work done

46. All girls in a place of safety shall be eligible to receive an allowance or payment for work done according to a scale and subject to such conditions as may be approved by the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Discipline

47. The discipline of each place of safety shall be maintained by the superintendent and the staff of the place of safety and shall be promoted by a system of rewards and privileges.

Privileges

48. Privileges may include suitable entertainment, participation in recreation, visits to parks and gardens, excursions, picnics and sports activities.

Punishments

49.—(1) When punishment is necessary for the maintenance of discipline, one of the following forms may be adopted:

- (a) forfeiture of rewards or privileges or temporary loss of recreation;
- (b) deprivation of pocket-money for specified periods;
- (c) imposition of tasks set by the superintendent;
- (d) suspension of visits from relatives and friends; or
- (e) separation from other girls.

(2) The punishment under paragraph (1)(e) shall only be imposed in exceptional cases and subject to the following conditions:

- (a) no girl below the age of 12 years shall be kept in separation from other girls;

- (b) the room used for the purpose shall be bright and airy and kept lighted after dark;
- (c) some form of occupation shall be given to the girl;
- (d) means of communication with a member of the staff shall be provided; and
- (e) if the separation is to be continued for more than 24 hours, the circumstances shall be reported immediately to the Director-General and his approval in writing obtained.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Discipline without corporal punishment to be the aim

50.—(1) Every effort shall be made to enforce discipline in the place of safety without resort to corporal punishment.

(2) Where corporal punishment is found to be necessary, its application shall be preceded by an inquiry held by the superintendent who shall record the evidence and the grounds of her decision.

Corporal punishment

51. Corporal punishment shall be subject to the following conditions:

- (a) it shall be inflicted on the palm of the hand with a cane of a type approved by the Director-General and shall not exceed 8 strokes on the palm of each hand;

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

- (b) it shall not be inflicted in the presence of other girls;
- (c) no girl with any physical or mental disability shall be so punished without the sanction of the Medical Officer; and
- (d) in any case in which corporal punishment is administered, the superintendent shall report the fact, together with the circumstances of the case, to the Director-General within 24 hours.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Record of punishment

52.—(1) The superintendent shall be responsible for the immediate recording of all corporal and other punishment in the punishment book and shall enter therein such details as may be required by the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) The punishment book shall be examined at each meeting of the Board and shall be signed by the Chairman or the Deputy Chairman presiding over the meeting.

Staff forbidden to inflict corporal punishment

53.—(1) Subject to these Rules, no member of the staff in a place of safety shall inflict any kind of corporal punishment on any girl in the place of safety.

(2) The term “corporal punishment” for the purposes of paragraph (1) includes striking, cuffing, shaking or any other form of physical violence.

(3) Any member of the staff who commits a breach of this rule shall render herself liable to instant dismissal.

No resident to punish another

54. No girl in a place of safety shall be allowed to administer any form of punishment to any other girl in the place of safety.

Medical Officers

55. The Director-General shall appoint Medical Officers whose duties shall include —

- (a) a thorough examination of each girl on admission and shortly before leaving the place of safety;
- (b) an inspection of every girl in the place of safety once in 6 months;
- (c) the general inspection of each place of safety from a hygienic point of view;
- (d) the giving of advice as to diet and general hygiene;

- (e) the examination and treatment of all sick and ailing girls in the place of safety;
- (f) the compilation of medical reports in respect of each girl accommodated in each place of safety in a form approved by the Director-General; and

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

- (g) the furnishing of such report and certificate as the Director-General may require.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Medical Officers to attend Board meetings

56. Notice of meetings of the Board shall be given to Medical Officers so that they may have an opportunity of attending and of presenting a report to the Board.

Dental Officers

57.—(1) The Director-General shall appoint Dental Officers whose duties shall include an examination of the teeth of each girl in the place of safety at least once a year, and the undertaking of such fillings, extractions or other dental work as may be necessary.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) Dental Officers shall keep a record of their work in a form approved by the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Director-General to inform parents or guardian of admission of girl

58. Within 48 hours of the admission of a girl, the Director-General shall inform the girl's parents or guardian of the fact of her admission, if this is not already known to the parents or guardian.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Procedure when girl absent

59.—(1) If a girl absents herself from a place of safety without the permission of the superintendent or the person appointed to act for

her, notice shall be sent forthwith to the Commissioner of Police and to the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

(2) Every such case shall be noted in the log book and in the daily register.

Reports of death and other serious events

60. The superintendent shall report as soon as possible any death or any case of serious illness, infectious disease or serious accident to the parents or guardian of the girl and to the Director-General, and shall report such occurrence to the Board at the next following meeting.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Procedure when girl hospitalised

61. If it becomes necessary to remove a girl from a place of safety to a hospital, clinic or another place of safety for medical treatment or examination, the superintendent shall inform the parents or guardian of the girl and the Director-General.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Healthcare professionals and mental capacity assessors under section 160A of Act

62. For the purposes of section 160A of the Act —

(a) the following persons are recognised as healthcare professionals:

- (i) a paramedic;
- (ii) a psychiatrist;
- (iii) a registered dentist;
- (iv) a registered medical practitioner;
- (v) a registered nurse; and

(b) the following persons may be appointed by the Director-General as mental capacity assessors:

- (i) a psychiatrist;

- (ii) a psychologist;
- (iii) a registered medical practitioner.

[S 901/2024 wef 02/01/2025]

Keeping of registers, information, etc.

63. The Director-General shall arrange for the keeping of all registers and records and shall cause to be sent to him such returns, statements and other information as may be required by him from time to time.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Copy of Rules to be given to all persons involved

64. The Director-General shall cause a copy of these Rules to be given to each member of the staff in a place of safety, to each member of the Board and to the Medical and Dental Officers on appointment.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Places of safety to be open for inspection

65. The Director-General shall arrange that each place of safety shall be open at all times for inspection by any member of the Board and by other persons properly authorised to do so.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Internal administration

66. The Director-General may from time to time issue instructions or make regulations on matters concerning the internal administration and discipline of each place of safety.

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

Director-General to attend Board meetings

67. The Director-General or his representative may attend any meetings of the Board whenever he considers it necessary.

[G.N. Nos. S 198/74; S 29/77; S 71/94; S 179/97]

[S 530/2020 wef 01/07/2020]

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
WOMEN’S CHARTER (PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND
GIRLS) RULES
(CHAPTER 353, R 2)

This Legislative History is provided for the convenience of users of the Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) Rules. It is not part of this Charter.

1. G. N. No. S 198/1974 — The Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) Rules, 1974

Date of commencement : 1 July 1974

2. G. N. No. S 29/1977 — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) (Amendment) Rules 1977

Date of commencement : 11 February 1977

3. 1990 Revised Edition — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) Rules

Date of operation : 25 March 1992

4. G. N. No. S 71/1994 — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) (Amendment) Rules 1994

Date of commencement : 1 March 1994

5. G. N. No. S 179/1997 — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) (Amendment) Rules 1997

Date of commencement : 1 May 1997

6. 1998 Revised Edition — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) Rules

Date of operation : 15 June 1998

7. G.N. No. S 530/2020 — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) (Amendment) Rules 2020

Date of commencement : 1 July 2020

8. G.N. No. S 901/2024 — Women’s Charter (Protection of Women and Girls) (Amendment) Rules 2024

Date of commencement : 2 January 2025