

UIDAI: Nobody can be denied essential services over Aadhaar

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A DAY after *The Indian Express* reported that a pregnant woman was denied medical help at a Gurgaon hospital for not carrying her Aadhaar card, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said that it is investigating the claims and has taken serious note of the development. The UIDAI said it has "reiterated" that no government authority should deny "essential service or benefit" to a "genuine beneficiary" for want of Aadhaar card.

"If any official of a department denies a service for the lack of Aadhaar or lack of successful verification due to technical or any such reasons, a complaint should be lodged with the higher authorities of those departments for such unlawful denials," UIDAI said.

"There are exception handling regulations issued by UIDAI... which must be followed to make sure that no beneficiary is denied of benefits for want of Aadhaar," it said in a statement on Saturday.

Aadhaar's parent body said

that the "government is sensitive to the fact that no emergency services such as hospitalisation, etc., be denied for want of any document whatsoever, including Aadhaar. Aadhaar is meant to bring transparency and accountability in public service deliveries through effective use of technology and it should not be misused and made an excuse for any denial in the services."

Citing Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act and several office memorandums issued by various government bodies, UIDAI said it must be ensured that "bona fide beneficiaries are not deprived of their due benefits as alternative provisions have been made in the Aadhaar Act".

Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act says, "Provided that if an Aadhaar number is not assigned to an individual, the individual shall be offered alternate and viable means of identification for delivery of subsidy, benefit or service."

UIDAI will again write a letter to the Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories to ensure that Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016 is implemented.