

Topic II: Measures against Child Abuse

(1) Child Abuse

I. Current Situation of Child Abuse

The number of inquiries and reports that Child Guidance Centers receive concerning child abuse continues to increase nationwide. The number in FY2013 was 73,802, up by 40,394 (or 120.9%) from FY2004. In 2014, the number of cleared cases for child abuse was 698, an increase of 470 (or 206.1%) from 2004. As serious cases of child abuse have been happening one after another, the national government, as well as the police, must take measures for the prevention of child abuse.

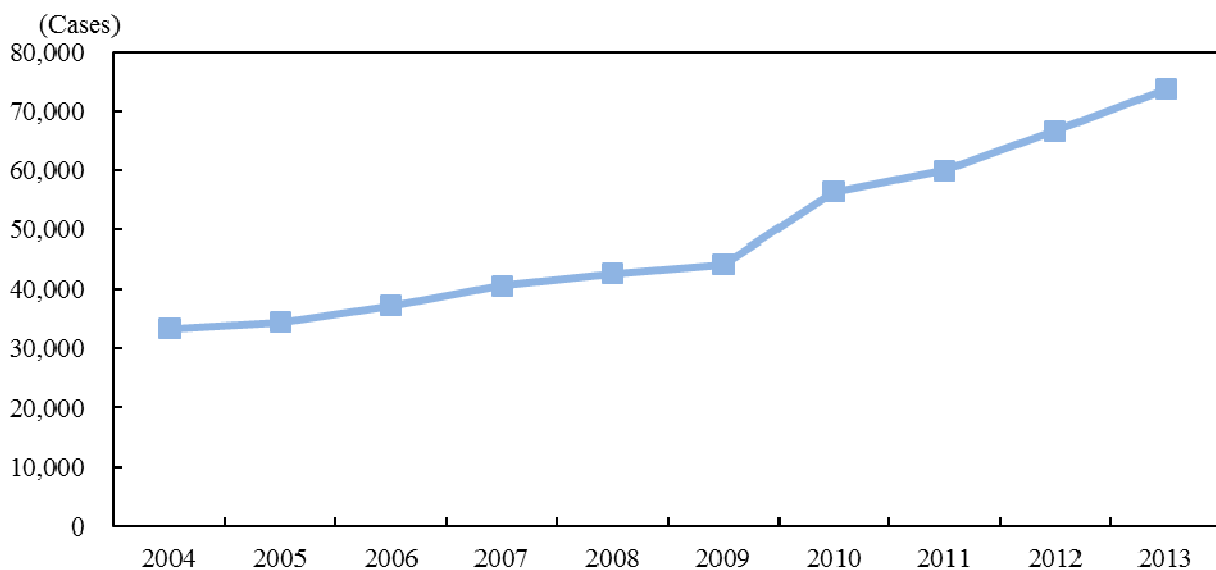
II. Measures Taken by the Police

When the police are informed of a child who is suspected of being abused, police officers take measures such as visiting the child at home to ensure that the child is safe, visiting neighbors of the child to collect information and making inquiries on various information. After determining the significance and urgency of the need to take measures, the police decide whether to pursue criminal charges of a child-abuse case, take the abused child into protective custody or give notice of child abuse to a Child Guidance

Center, with the first priority always given to the confirmation and securing of the safety of children. In 2014, the police took 2,034 children into protective custody and informed Child Guidance Centers about the abuse of 28,923 children.

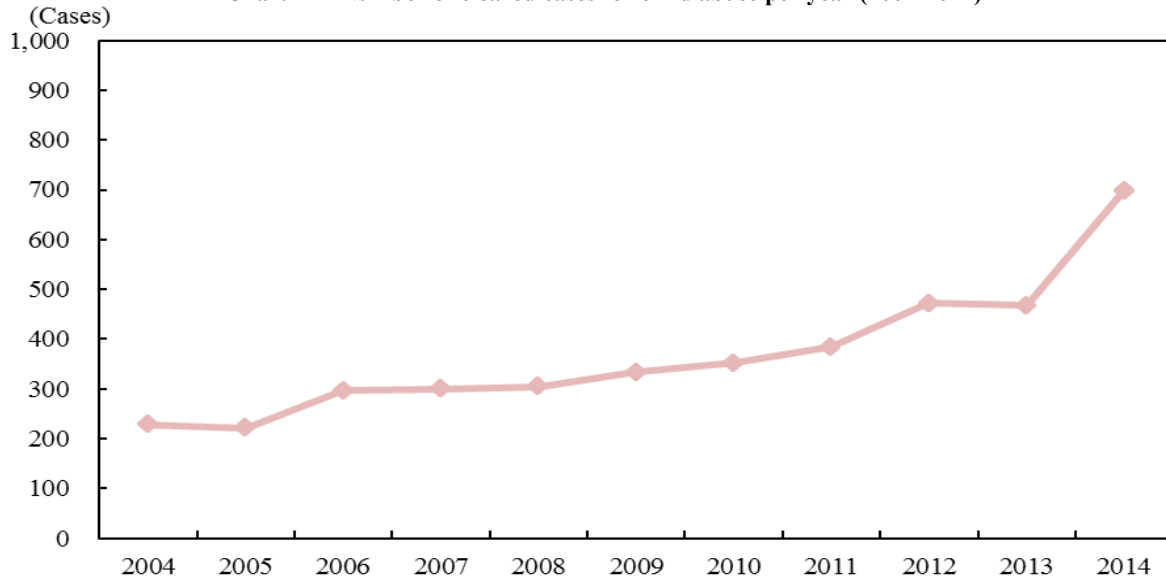
Case: In November 2014, the neighbor of a young boy called the police and informed them that the boy was walking around the streets alone at night. The police inquired into the circumstances of the boy, 6, and found that his mother, 26, frequently left the boy alone at home because of her night-time job. Due to the fact that her conduct had been reported to the police multiple times in the past and she had not improved the situation for her son, the police suspected that the boy had been neglected and took him in protective custody after which he was transferred to the Child Guidance Center.

Chart II-1 Number of child abuse inquiries/reports received by Child Guidance Centers per year (FY2004 - FY2013)



(Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

Chart II-2 Number of cleared cases for child abuse per year (2004-2014)



III. Collaboration with Child Guidance Centers

In order to detect and protect abused children at the earliest possible opportunity, the police collaborate with the Child Guidance Center. Specifically, the police conduct joint training with these centers so that police officers and officials of these centers can learn how they should inspect the domicile or residence of an abused child or search for a child who is suspected of being abused². Retired police officers are employed to support these operations with Child Guidance Centers. The addition of a juvenile support center³ for each Child Guidance Center is also promoted by the police.

When the director of a Child Guidance Center requests the assistance of a police

station chief⁴ in confirming the safety of a child by staff members of the center, police officers accompany the staff members to the incident site.



Joint training for inspections and search by officials of Child Guidance Centers

Case: In February 2014, the police received a report of an abused child. After informing a Child Guidance Center, police officers accompanied the center's staff members to the residence of a boy in order to confirm his safety. They found that his father, 26, and mother, 23, had been keeping their 3-year-old son restrained on a dog leash, which was tied to a window lock. By March 2014, both parents were arrested for illegal arrest and confinement of the boy. The boy

2: Article 9-3 of the Act on the Prevention, etc. of Child Abuse stipulates the following: A prefectural governor may, when he/she finds suspicion of ongoing child abuse in cases where the custodian of the child fails to follow the request for appearance, cause an official engaged in the affairs concerning welfare of children to inspect the domicile or residence of the child or search for the child, for ensuring that safety of the child is confirmed and secured, with a permit issued in advance by a judge of a district court which has jurisdiction over the location of the domicile or residence of the child.

3: As of April 1, 2015, 195 juvenile support centers have been established nationwide with 66 of these centers located outside police facilities.

4: Article 10 of the Act on the Prevention, etc. of Child Abuse stipulates the following: When the director of a Child Guidance Center intends to confirm the safety of a child and/or take temporary protective custody of a child, he/she may ask the chief of a police station having jurisdiction over the location of the domicile or residence of the child for assistance, as needed.

was put under the temporary protective custody of the Child Guidance Center.

(2) Crimes Related to Child Pornography

Child pornography depicts children as victims of sexual abuse and assault, and therefore are vicious crimes that infringe significantly on children's human rights. Against a backdrop of growing international concern regarding the defense of children's rights and protection of children from crimes related to child pornography, the Act on the Partial Revision to the Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography⁵ was enacted in June, 2014. With this enactment, punishable offenses were widened to include possession of child pornography for the purpose of satisfying one's sexual curiosity and production of child pornography by means of secret filming⁶.

Pursuant to the revised Act⁷, the police have stepped up on the crackdown on crimes related to child pornography. In the period from July 15, 2015, when the revised Act was put into force, to the end of 2015, there were 29 cleared cases for production of secretly filmed child pornography involving 28 children as victims.

Case: In July 2014, an unemployed man, 48, secretly filmed two undressed young girls in the men's dressing room of a public bathhouse, by using a wristwatch video camera. The following August, the man was arrested for production of secretly filmed child pornography, a violation of the newly revised Act on Regulation and Punishment of Acts Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.



Wristwatch video camera used for secret filming

(3) Violent Sex Crimes against Children

With the aim of preventing and promptly countering crimes in which children are victimized, the police have been taking the following countermeasures.

I. Promotion of Operations by Juvenile and Woman Aegis Team (JWAT)

In April 2009, JWAT⁸ was established by the Metropolitan Police Department and by each Prefectural Police Headquarters. The JWAT collect and analyze information on cases against juveniles and women that are considered to be the preliminary stages of sexual crime, such as accosting and shadowing, to identify the suspect. An identified suspect is arrested or given a warning or offered guidance by the JWAT. In addition to conventional police controls, these preemptive and preventive efforts of the JWAT are actively promoted to prevent sex crimes against juveniles and women.

Case: In October 2014, the police received a report on a case of indecency, and the JWAT conducted an investigation. According to the report, a man talked to a 7-year-old girl who was on her way to school. He said, "Hey, stop", and then proceeded to press his hand on the girl's lower abdomen, while putting his cellphone inside her skirt to take photographs. Within the same month, a man, 32, was identified as a suspect and arrested for forcible indecency.

II. Strengthening the System to Prevent Violent Child Sex Offenders from Repeating Offenses after They Are Released

5: The Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children

6: The provisions stipulating prohibitions on the possession of child pornography for the purpose of satisfying one's sexual curiosity and the retention of electromagnetic recordings of child pornography became applicable on July 15, 2015.

7: The Act on Regulation and Punishment of Acts Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children

8: Juvenile and Woman Aegis Team

Since June 2005, each Prefectural Police Headquarters has been making it a rule to obtain information from the Ministry of Justice for confirming the whereabouts of persons who were released after serving time for forcible indecency or other violent sex offenses against children under the age of 13. In April 2011, the police began to reinforce measures aimed at preventing repeat offenses. When necessary, the police, with the proper consent of the former child sex offenders, conduct interviews with them.