

Section 2: Improvement of Infrastructure and System for Crime Victim Support

It is expected that “the Measures for Crime Victims shall be taken properly according to the situation and reasons of the harm, the situation in which Crime Victims are in, and other circumstances. (Article 3 Clause 2 of the Basic Act)” Also, “the Measures for Crime Victims shall be taken so that Crime Victims may receive necessary support continuously from the time they receive harm until they restore their peaceful life again. (Article 3 Clause 3 of the Basic Act)”

For that purpose, the State, local governments, other related organizations such as the Japan Legal Support Center, and other related parties such as private entities that provide support for crime victims, “shall cooperate with one another (Article 7 of the Basic Act)” for smooth implementation of the measures for Crime Victims. In order to place these provisions into effect, various communities have advanced their system for support.

1. Crime Victim Policy Division and Comprehensive Response Desk in Local Government

(1) Efforts for Establishment

On the basis of the First Basic Plan and the Second Basic Plan, the Cabinet Office has encouraged local governments to designate a crime victim policy division, and a comprehensive response desk (hereinafter referred to as “comprehensive response desk”) which properly provide information with regards to the crime victim support within the locality.

i) Situation in Prefectures and Ordinance-designated Cities

As of April 1, 2012, all prefectures and ordinance-designated cities have designated

their crime victim policy division and comprehensive response desks.

Every such crime victim policy division is concurrently responsible for other policy area(s). On April 1, 2013, 84% of the crime victim policy divisions are also in charge of regional Safety and crime prevention. 69% are with traffic safety. 24% are with consumer protection. 18% are with human rights, and 16% are with gender equality. Every such division is pursuing relevant policy areas and even if the crime victim policy division is not in charge of some of those policy areas, they at least should promote information sharing and cooperation with respective divisions.

ii) Situation in Municipalities levels

As of April 1, 2013, out of all 1,722 municipalities and special wards (hereinafter referred to as “municipalities”), 1,643 (about 95%) have established a crime victim policy division, and 1,188 (about 69%) have established a comprehensive response desk.

The prefectures that have both a crime victim policy division and a comprehensive response desk in all of their municipalities are 18: Akita, Yamagata, Tochigi, Gunma, Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Shiga, Kyoto, Hyogo, Wakayama, Shimane, Okayama, Yamaguchi, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Kagoshima. In general, the rate of designation of crime victim policy divisions is higher than that of comprehensive response desks. Some prefectures have less than 50% in the establishment rate of comprehensive response desk even though they have a crime victim policy division in every municipality.

Voice of a Crime Victim (Excerpt)

Mr. Kiyoshi Sato

Crimes happen every day here and there and are reported by media as news. When the victim is a small child, most of you probably feel very sorry for her/him. But as soon as the program changes to other subjects like sports or entertainment, you too would likely to be able to change your feelings. However, to the bereaved family of a victim, like us, such news remains in our heads, haunt us, and causes so-called flashback. Please understand. That is the crime victim.

Please hear my story on the victimization of my daughter by imagining how you may feel or what you can do if a member of your family, your friend or your acquaintance faced similar incident. By doing so, I think that you would be able to feel more closer to what it is to be victimized by a crime and be able to approach to victims as if the victimization was your own affair.

Our eldest daughter aged 6 then, was taken her life away by a large dump truck more than 20 tons weight including the cargo crushing virtually her whole body while turning left when she was crossing by bicycle on the pedestrian cross way on green light at the intersection of National Route 1 together with her mother on the way home from the swimming school on May 24, 2003 around half past 11 a.m. The cause of death was written just as “the general fracture,” and so it was, she died instantaneous with most of her body and the head smashed.

Our daughter’s body was covered by a white cloth. Without anyone other than me confirmed her face, nor said farewell by looking at her face, she was cremated.

Nowadays, the Basic Act has been enacted in our country and support center for crime victims are present at every 47 prefectures. But it is important for the victim to be able to reach such center. Yet, it is difficult for the bereaved family to access such center. I would consider instituting support tools that victims can reach by their own is expected task of local government. It is important that the local government to create an accessible system.

Although every police station has a crime-victim support section, but it takes much courage for victims to steps into police or prosecutors office by ourselves. On the other hand, the local government office is familiar to us. That is why it is very important to have the help desk for victims there. In my case, I went there to register the death of my daughter or to cancel my business registration. How it would be helpful if some system was there at local government to extend helping hands to us and connected us to necessary supports. How effective it could be, for us, victims, who are yet incapable to search for help by ourselves. The support there, is not just about to offer the help. It should be ready to hear the victim and invite the victim to speak of what is needed. I would sincerely request you to think about that.

It is important for those who are engaging in victim support to understand the victims’ situations firmly, not to cause secondary victimization by insensitive words, and to have victims’ perspectives for the purpose of being able to communicate at the same position, and being able to listen to the victims’ voice sincerely. The earlier it is, the more effective for victims’ recovery.

In that sense, PR is very important to make people to know about crime victim support. I too experienced thoughtless words by people around me and suffered secondary victimizations. Not to create such unnecessary pain, it is important to raise public awareness on crime victim support. If everyone knows about crime victim support and the existence of place to offer help, any neighbors or general people could inform victims so the victims could reach to necessary support in early stages.

Early support is essential but victims themselves are not conscious of what is needed or wanted. In the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake, I heard that volunteers who just listened to victims closely were greatly appreciated. Indeed, someone listening to the heavy heart means greatly. Including that sort of “support” is also important.



In addition, I would imagine the local government officers tend to draw a line of what they can do and what they cannot do according to their mandate. I ask them to proactively consider what they can do. Again I am repeating but I would appreciate if you could assume that you became a victim, how would you feel, how would you act and then think what you can do as a government officer and act accordingly.

(2) Efforts for Proper Response

The aim of establishing a comprehensive response desk at local government is to make easier for crime victims to obtain necessary information. However, it also is important for any desk, whether the residence certification issue, health insurance issue etc., should be aware that the local residents that they face could be a crime victim without telling them so and that they should be able to communicate properly without causing unnecessary secondary victimizations.

Therefore, many prefectures and ordinance-designated cities have prepared manuals to prevent secondary victimizations and are holding training for their officers.

In addition, many prefectural crime victim policy divisions are experimenting with various coordination measures such as holding internal meeting with other relevant divisions, meetings with victim policy divisions of municipalities, training municipality officials and information sharing via e-mail magazines.

2. Collaboration with Internal and External Organizations

(1) Promotion of Preparation and Effective Use of the “Handbook on Support for Crime Victims (provisional name)”

To construct a crime-victim support network in each community, the related divisions, organizations and entities have to share information about what sort of support are provided by each. Under the Second Basic Plan, the Cabinet Office requested them to prepare

“Handbook on support for crime victims (provisional name. Hereinafter referred to as “handbook”)” that summarizes key issues on victim support, various support providers and their contact points, etc.

As of April 1, 2013, 47 of prefectures or ordinance-designated cities have prepared the handbook, and out of them, 17 have revised it more than once. Some handbooks are prepared in a file format so whatever revised could be easily reflected. Some prepares the list of contact points of related organizations and entities, etc. in separate volume for annual update.

These handbooks are distributed to respective divisions, municipalities, related organizations and entities etc. within the prefecture and are utilized for training and building crime victim support networks.

(2) Collaboration with Related Organizations and Entities, etc. in the Community

Under the Second Basic Plan, related organizations and entities, etc. have strengthened their collaboration in accordance with “Part. 4-1-(10) Policy No. 154,” which states that “With the cooperation of the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the police are to promote collaboration among the members of the Liaison Conference for Victim Support and the Local Network for Victim Support, which are established at the level of each prefectural police and police station and whose members are comprised of departments under governor, Local Public Prosecutors Office, bar association, medical associations, clinical psychologist associations, private crime victim support entities, etc., and will improve the response capabilities for specific cases by strengthening mutual cooperation in diverse fields, such as daily lives, healthcare, and court proceedings.”

“Liaison Conference for Victim Support” is an organization to coordinate relevant agencies and the prefectural police, while “Local Network for Victim Support” is organized at police station level for more fine-tuned comprehensive support according to the specific needs of the crime victims of the individual cases.

As of April 1, 2012, Liaison Conference for Victim Support is held at all 47 prefectures, while 1,126 Local Networks for Victim Support are being held (the number of all police stations is 1,174).

The Cabinet Office made an inquiry to the prefectural crime victim policy divisions (i.e. the division under the Governor to represent prefectural government at the Liaison Conference for Victim Support) about other participants of the Liaison Conference for Victim Support. Based on the response on April 1, 2013, prefectural police, the crime victim policy division of prefectural government, District Public Prosecutors Office, Japan Legal Support Center (houterasuu), and private crime victim support organization are common participants in all Liaison Conference. Some specialized agencies such as Child Consultation Centers may be involved with a separate sectional committee addressing to specific crime victims. The Probation Office, Clinical Psychologist associations, bar association, and medical association are involved in many Liaison Conferences, but the participation of Mental Health Center, General Welfare Center, and the Board of Education are partial.

(3) Effort for Constructing Collaboration Systems

In addition to Liaison Conference, Kanagawa Prefecture, for instance, was the first in the nation to establish “Kanagawa Crime Victim Support Station” in June 2009, a collaboration support center of the Prefecture, police and private crime victim support organizations. Saitama Prefecture too has integrated the office of the Prefecture, police and private crime victim support organization in May 2011.

Depending on the region, specialized and/or separate committees are held under the aforementioned Liaison Conference to focus specific needs of particular types of victims such as sexual crime victims, juvenile victims, and traffic victims. Also, some Prefecture is pursuing more elaborated system for support; for example, concluding an agreement with the police, association of obstetricians and gynecologists and/or relevant organizations. Other examples are

to prepare a guideline to establish support system in case of large-scale accidents or to carry out simulation for support coordination based on an assumption of actual cases.

The Cabinet Office has been promoting such

regional efforts to build coordination by workshop projects. In 2012, three projects were carried out in Fukushima, Kanagawa and Osaka Prefectures to strengthen their coordination to support victims of sexual crimes.

Column
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Efforts Made by Local Governments (Projects to improve Collaboration to Support Sexual Crime Victims)

1. “Several training seminars and advocacy projects to improve the support for victims of sexual violence” (Fukushima Pref.)

Fukushima Prefecture has been collaborating with related organizations to improve its network to support victims of sexual violence. However, some supporters had uncertainties if their services are helpful to those victims so the Prefecture decided to co-host projects as below to eliminate such uncertainties by allowing those supporters to learn the situation of victims to improve their support skills.

- Several seminars separately addressing to different targets (victim consultants, those related with education, healthcare providers, teenagers who could be either a potential victim and/or the victim’s close friend, and those who are in age equivalent to teenagers’ parents)
- Preparation and distribution of leaflets that summarizes the key points to be aware when supporting victims (separately designed for support agencies, education institutes, and healthcare professionals)



Leaflets

2. “A seminar and advocacy projects to improve the support for sexual crime victims” (Kanagawa Pref.)

Kanagawa Prefecture already had achieved a certain level of a network of supports for sexual crime victims in the form of an agreement among the Prefecture, police, private crime victim support organization and the Kanagawa Association of Obstetricians/ Gynecologists on the support for sexual crime victims.

Following projects were carried out to further improve the medical support by obstetrics & gynecology institutions and to create an accessible support environment for victims:

- Training seminar for obstetricians/gynecologists and other healthcare providers
- Preparation and distribution of leaflets for obstetrics/gynecology institutions
- Distribution of cards and stickers with the print out of the telephone number of “Kanagawa Crime Victim Support Station” run by the Prefecture, police and private crime victim support organization to be displayed at the women’s powder rooms at obstetrics/ gynecology institutions or commercial facilities.



Card

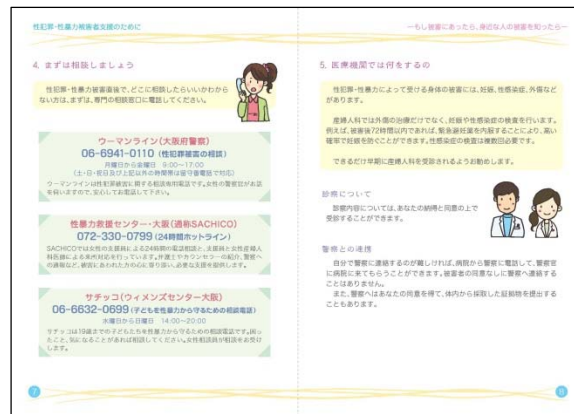


Sticker

3. “Advocacy project on the support for victims of sexual crimes /violence at early stage” (Osaka Pref.)

Osaka Prefecture has become a forerunner in Japan to have a comprehensive support system for sexual violence victims by the presence of the “Sexual Assault Crisis Healing Intervention Center Osaka (SACHICO)”, an one-stop consultation center specialized for sexual violence victims located in a general hospital as the core to coordinate with police and other relevant organizations for various supports. The following projects were undertaken to inform residents of Osaka on the consequence of the sexual victimizations and the benefits of having such support system in advance:

- Open lecture to citizens (about the situations of support offered by “SACHICO”, “Women’s Center-Osaka”, and the Prefectural Police)
- Preparation and distribution of leaflets (distributed mainly to local high schools and schools for challenged children)



Leaflet

(4) Collaboration with/Assistance to Private Crime Victim Support Organizations

In the coordinated effort to support crime victims as mentioned above, the activities of private crime victim support organizations are essential in connecting crime victims “continuously” (as mentioned in Article 3 Clause 3 of the Basic Act) to the supports individually provided by related organizations. The private organizations’ support activities had preceded the national or local governments’ efforts under the Basic Act to begin with. Also, sensing the good will of those who are close to them could be the greatest help for the recovery of the victims who had lost their faith towards society.

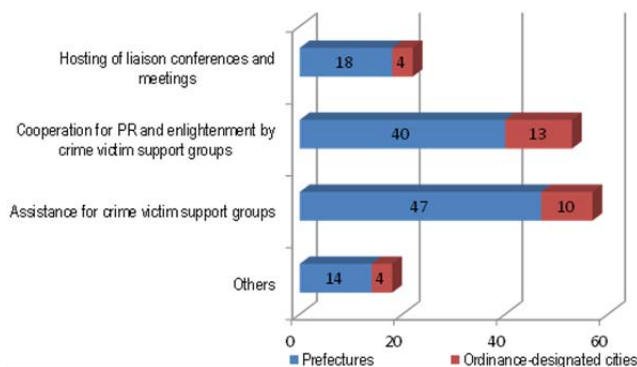
On the other hand, their activities mainly depend on individual supporters’ efforts. Thus the quality of their performances may vary by organizations

and/or regions and may lack constancy of the support. In order to overcome the problem, private crime victim support organizations themselves are striving to systematize their operations.

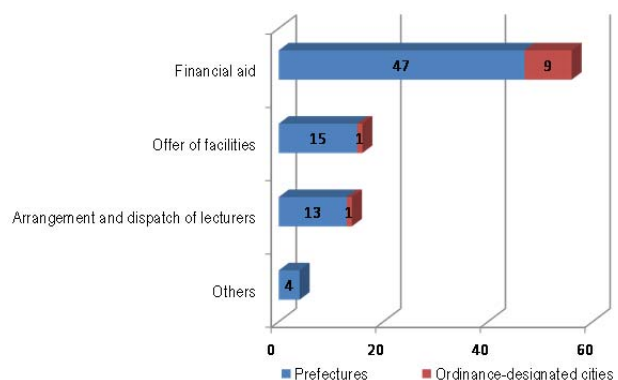
As of April 1, 2013, local governments are also making efforts to strengthen their collaboration with civil societies in various ways as shown in the chart below.

Especially, the subsidiaries or commissions offered by local governments (including a budget allocated by each prefectural police) constitute a significant role to stabilize the financial basis of those private organizations. At the same time, allowing those private organization to use some unoccupied offices for free or at low fees, dispatching lecturers to the private organizations’ seminars can be acknowledged as other forms of financial support for those private organizations.

Collaboration with private crime victim support organizations (2012)



Assistance for private crime victim support organizations (2012)



Column

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“My Experience as a Crime Victim” and “Current Situation and Future Challenge about Crime Victim Support” (Excerpt)

Chairman of Certified Specified Non-profit Corporation, National Network for Victim Support Mr. Norio Hirai

I am one of the crime-bereaved families. In 1996, my eldest son was killed in Beijing. I had never thought that I myself would become a crime victim until then.

Frankly speaking, I was fully immersed in my work until then. But I decided to have “a life with my son” and is engaging in this support activity since then.

It is not that the crime victims can heal by the presence of some support. Crime victim support is to walk along the crime victims who are beginning to lead their own lives again.

Compared with European history of crime victim support, our support activity is far behind. However, would-be crime victim support activities need to be designed in balance with our social welfare system and other values among Japanese people. Otherwise, our support activities will not be supported by many people. We as Japanese must build the crime victim support that is suitable for Japan. For that, our organization will start the second three-year plan from this April.

We focus on three areas (human resource development, function as a central body, and advocacy

of crime victim support).

We prioritize human resource development. We have unified the levels of supporters as beginners, intermediates, experts and coordinators, and have specified a curriculum for each level. This systematized training, which includes experience such as going to a courthouse to learn about direct support started from last April.

Our organization has about 1,300 volunteers and about 160 staff members, providing consultation for 17,000 cases per a year. Our centers exist in every prefecture throughout Japan and most of them are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. but closed on Saturday and Sunday. Probably, many crime victims prefer to seek consultations at night or on weekends. We are currently discussing the improvement of our support.

Once our center is designated by Prefectural Public Safety Commission as an early support groups for crime victims, then the center could receive the information about the victim through the police with the victim’s consent so we would be able to offer the victim support when most important, meaning, the earliest possible. But four centers located in Shimane, Ehime, Tokushima and North Hokkaido have not yet been designated as the early support group. We would hope to immediately resolve the issue somehow.

With regards to the contents of issues brought to us, 35% is not about victimization by a crime. 65% is on crime victimization, most of which are bodily crimes and sexual crimes. Especially, the number of consultations on sexual crimes is showing a sharp increase recently. Establishing so-called “one-stop center”, where sexual crime victims can resolve their needs such as a doctor, lawyer and the police at one location, is on-going efforts. We too are making great efforts to support victims in such ways in Miyagi, Kochi, Okayama, Fukuoka, Fukushima and possibly others.

Majority of problems are resolved through telephone consultations. But “direct support” cases, meaning that we escort victims to the court or hospital, are particularly increasing.

Financially, about 42.6% of centers are in deficit. Centers at the less populated areas tend to relies on subsidies by local governments. Conversely speaking, such centers are not yet capable to increase members and/or donations by their own efforts.

Another major challenge is to build collaboration. The desirable system is to have a crime victim at the center and supporters to surround the victim. Although it would be difficult to support victims at physically one location as a one-stop center we can collaborate with other support provider If a victim comes to our center, we will help as much as possible by collaborating with related organizations. But it is difficult for us to go further into the institution, like prefectural government or municipality government, and to search relevant department by ourselves. That is why we would to request you all to think about collaborating within your organization.

Another challenge is how to convey the voice of victims to each citizen. If I inquire 100 persons, all 100 persons would know about “crime victimization” but they wouldn’t know about “crime victims”. Those two are definitely different. Conveying the voice s of victims would be essential. Please you too convey voices of victims to people. If requested, we would like to cooperate as much as we can. We would appreciate if you could learn our activities even a little and also to understand about crime victims.

