

Column 3 Efforts in Collaboration for Sexual Crime Victim Support by Private Entities

1 Efforts by Victim Support Center Okayama (VSCO)

(1) Victim Support Center Okayama (VSCO)

It has been 12 years since the establishment of VSCO (Victim Support Center Okayama) in 2003. It was designated as an early support group for crime victims in 2011, and then was approved as a Public Interest Incorporated Association Victim Support Center Okayama (VSCO) in 2013.

It has been making efforts to support sexual crime victims since its establishment, and searching for its own way to offer any kind of support as VSCO because victims have tended to be blamed and have great difficulty speaking out despite sexual crime being a very crude crime which destroys victims' dignity and human rights.

(2) Collaboration with Okayama Association of Obstetricians & Gynecologists

In January 2013, VSCO signed an agreement with Okayama Association of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (joined by most gynecological medical institutes in the prefecture) and built an emergency support network for sexual crime victims, which has made it possible for VSCO to provide their ideal support.

(3) VSCO's Ideal Support – The Two Pillars –

The first pillar is to protect the victims mentally and physically.

In order to do so, it is important to see an obstetrician-gynecologist to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; therefore it is necessary to connect the victims to the emergency support within 72 hours after the incident. For this purpose, VSCO created and utilizes a communication sheet to share information with an obstetrician-gynecologist. In general, the cost is covered by the prefectural public funding system, however, if the public funding is not available in cases such as when the victim refuses to report to the police, there is VSCO's original allowance system, an emergency allowance fund for sexual crime victims (to cover the cost of emergency contraception within 72 hours of the incident, and tests and treatment for infectious diseases).

The second pillar is to free the victims from mistrust of people and gain independence.

This support is to regain independent life for the future by facing their problems and switching their mindsets and punishing the perpetrators. In order to do so, VSCO encourages victims to report incidents to the police and provides collaborative support for trials with a VSCO supporting attorney who is an expert in victim support, for daily life with administrative organizations, and for mental support with a psychiatrist.

(4) Enlightenment Activity

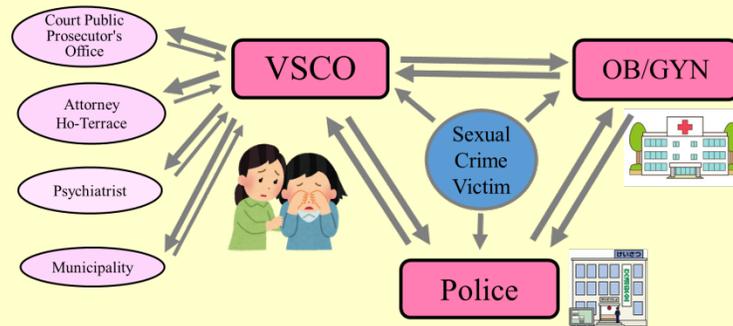
Brochures (in collaboration with the prefectural Association of Obstetricians & Gynecologists) and leaflets for enlightenment are distributed to the municipalities in the prefecture, Board of Education, medical institutes and related organizations, but more publicity is needed.

(5) Future of VSCO

The VSCO support system is the equivalent of a collaborative style with a consultation center as a core, found in the Manual for Establishing and Operating a One-Stop Support Center for Victims of Sexual Crime and Sexual Violence. It is currently working to build a core 24-hour medical system by enhancing collaboration between the prefectural police, Association of Obstetricians & Gynecologists and VSCO; furthermore, it is planning to raise awareness of and expand the local network by enhancing collaboration with the region, administrations, Society of Certified Clinical Psychologists, Board of Education and particularly nursing teachers.

For the victims of sexual crimes

One-Stop Center for Sexual Crime Victims



Source: Victim Support Center Okayama (VSCO)

2 Efforts by Sexual Assault Crisis Healing Intervention Center Osaka (SACHICO)

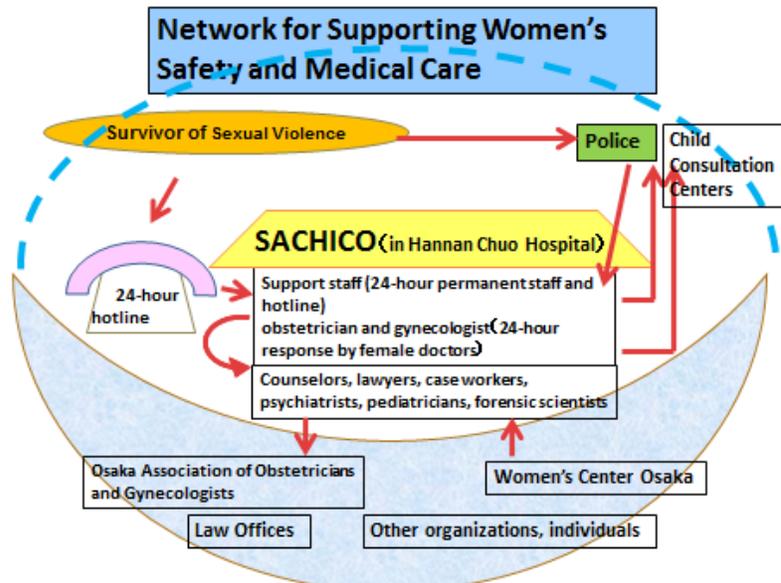
Sexual Assault Crisis Healing Intervention Center Osaka (SACHICO)

SACHICO defines all sexual activities that are without consent, not equal and forced as sexual violence, and considers it to be a medical issue as well as a human dignity issue. SACHICO established a waiting/meeting room, examination room and staff room at the corner of Hannan Medical Welfare Center, Hannan Central Hospital in Matsubara city, Osaka and started the project in April 2010.

In SACHICO, the support staff take charge of the support coordination and consultation, while six full-time female doctors working on a shift system take charge of obstetrical and gynecological treatment as outpatient care of Hannan Central Hospital, and it operates one-stop support for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as a joint project. The main support consists of a 24 hour hotline by SACHICO support staff, on-site consultation, information sharing on other support groups, obstetrical and gynecological treatment/evidence collection by a female doctor of Hannan Central Hospital, legal support by a cooperating lawyer, or counseling by a counselor who is specifically trained for sexual violence victims from Women's Center Osaka while collaborating with Osaka Prefectural Police, Obstetrical Gynecological Society of Osaka, and regional Child Guidance Centers.

Currently SACHICO is funded by donations, and there are some challenges to overcome in order to continue its support activities, including securing support staff and enhancing training.

SACHICO's Support System



Source: Sexual Assault Crisis Healing Intervention Center Osaka (SACHICO)

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Collaboration for the Support of Child Victims

Crimes involving child victims continue to unfold. Child abuse invades the human rights of children considerably and has significant impact on their physical and mental development as well as character formation. Based on the Act on the Prevention, etc. of Child Abuse (Act No. 82 of 2000, known as the “The Child Abuse Prevention Act”) established in 2000, there are seamless and comprehensive measures taken for each step of child abuse countermeasures, such as prevention and early detection of abuse, early support, protection and independence support of abused children, or support for their parents. Furthermore, there are times of difficulties, other than the case of child abuse, when a child becomes a crime victim in an unexpected way, or loses his/her parents or siblings in a crime. However, it is difficult for a child who has been involved in a crime to seek protection or support on their own, therefore it is necessary to provide appropriate support for children who are in need of help by collaborating with related organizations and entities. This section introduces collaboration to support child victims.

(1) Regional Council of Countermeasures for Children Requiring Aid (Regional Network for Child Protection)

The Regional Council of Countermeasures for Children Requiring Aid (Regional Network for Child Protection) was legalized in the Amendment of the Child Welfare Act in 2004, and then its establishment in municipalities became a best-effort obligation in the Amendment of the Child Welfare Act in 2007. The council and its related organizations such as Child Guidance Center, schools, Board of Education and the police share information on children in need of protection in order to promote early detection and appropriate support of children in need of protection (including children in need of support, and specific pregnant women) such as abused children, and the said council is established in 98.9% of municipalities as of April 1, 2013. Its establishment promotes early detection and early support of children in need of protection in collaboration with related organizations, as well as mutual understanding of the related organizations.

Regional Council of Countermeasures for Children Requiring Aid (Regional Network for Child Protection)

Functions to be Achieved

In order to achieve early detection, as well as appropriate protection and support of children in need of protection (including children in need of support and pregnant women), it is important to:

- Share information and thoughts among related organizations on these said children and,
- Respond under appropriate collaboration.

It is also important that municipalities (and prefectures in some cases) establish the Regional Council of Countermeasures for Children Requiring Aid (Regional Network for Child Protection) and:

- (1) Clarify the responsibility system to include mutual collaboration of related organizations and coordination of role-sharing among them and,
- (2) Request for privacy protection and clarify the rules of information sharing with related organizations.



Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

(2) Family Education Support Team

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology promotes activities to support family education, such as consultation by the systematized family education support team or providing learning opportunities for parents. In

addition, it promotes experimental study on the home visit outreach support method to provide support for families that cannot carry out family education.

Column (4) Efforts on Home Visit Style Family Education Support (Beppu, Oita Prefecture)
– Beppu Home Visit Style Outreach Support Project –

The city of Beppu implements the effort to promote the formation of a foundation to support family education by enhancing the consultation system or providing information and learning opportunities for the families with children who do not attend school and withdraw due to ‘parent’s lack of ability to foster them, or irregular lifestyle’, and ‘children’s characteristics or poor academic performances’.

The city formed a “regional council” which consists of the administration division, chairman of a school principal association, social workers/chairman of children’s social worker council, scholars, and family education support staff, as well as a “support team” which consists of family education support staff, social workers/children’s social workers and student volunteers. The “support team” implements the following efforts based on information or requests from the “regional council”, families and schools:

- (1) Student volunteers pay home visits to children and provide learning support.
- (2) Family education support staff provide support and enlightenment for parents.
- (3) Social workers/children’s social workers watch over the family.

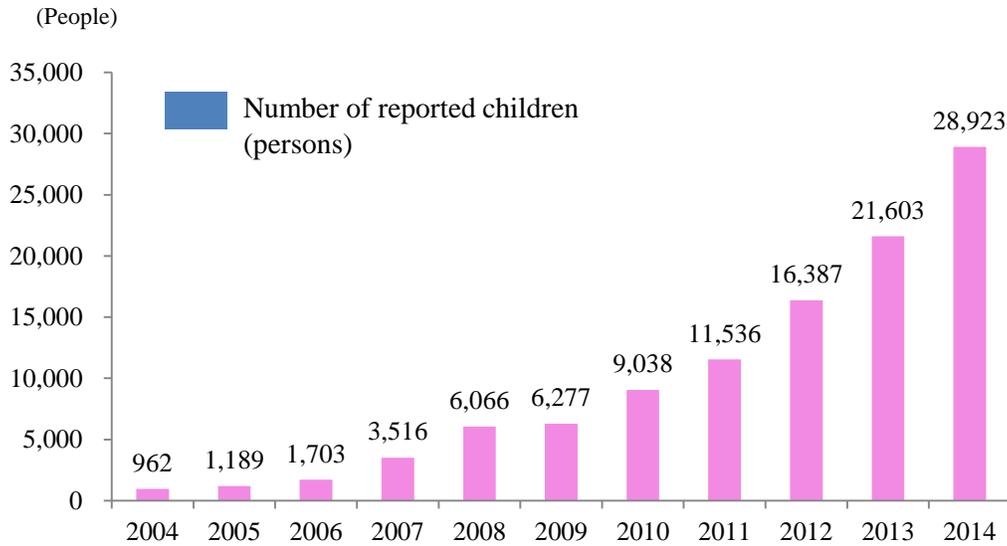
In 2014, it was reported that there were positive changes seen in children and families who received the support, and a rise in awareness of the importance of supporting families in the community by social workers/children’s social workers, and students sharing information. It is expected to see early detection and early prevention of bullying, truancy and child abuse, to build desirable child-parents relationships with parent’s stable mind, or to establish a system to watch over families and children in the community.

(3) Measures for Victims of Child Abuse

The police make every effort for early detection of child abuse victims and reporting to the Child Guidance Center through various occasions. In addition, child abuse cases have been subject to the ‘Anonymous -report Hot Line’ since 2010.

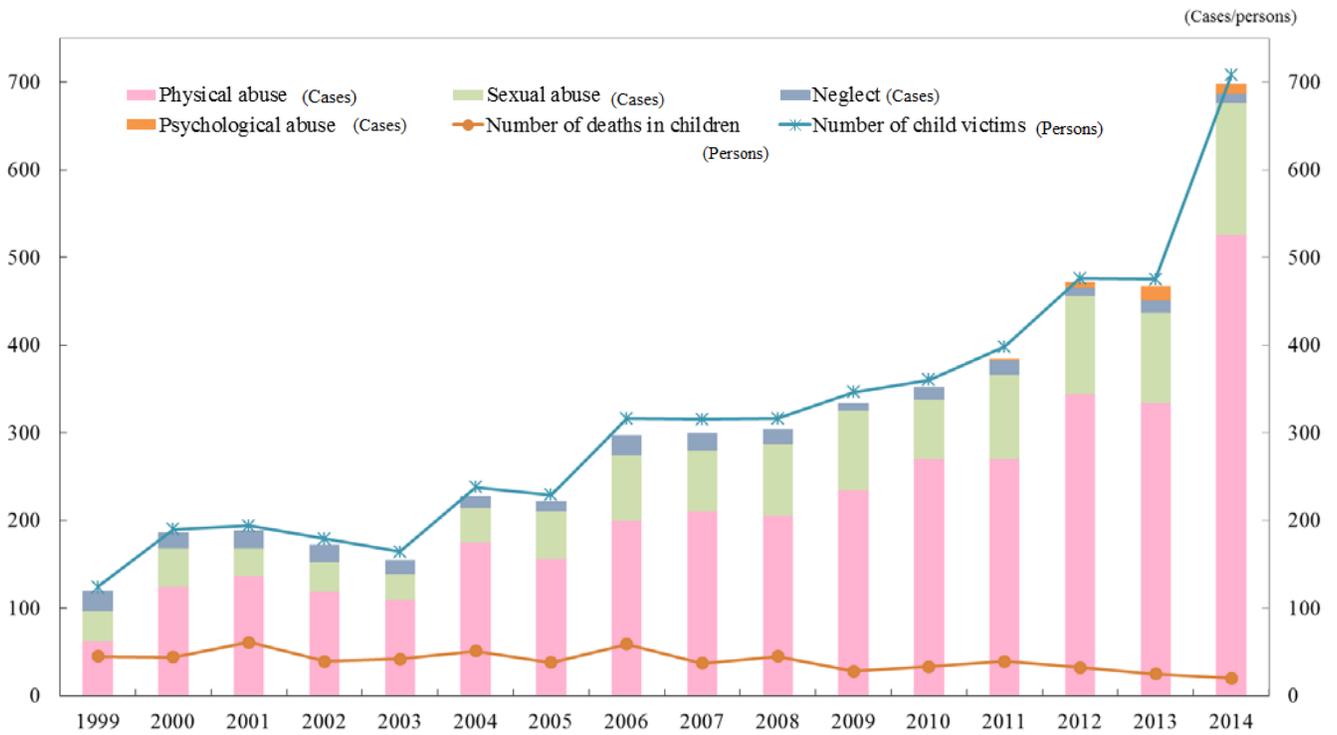
Furthermore, the police implement assistance to prefectural governors or the chiefs of Child Guidance Centers to take security verification and temporary protective custody of children or conduct on-site inspection smoothly.

Change in the number of children reported to the Child Guidance Center by the police



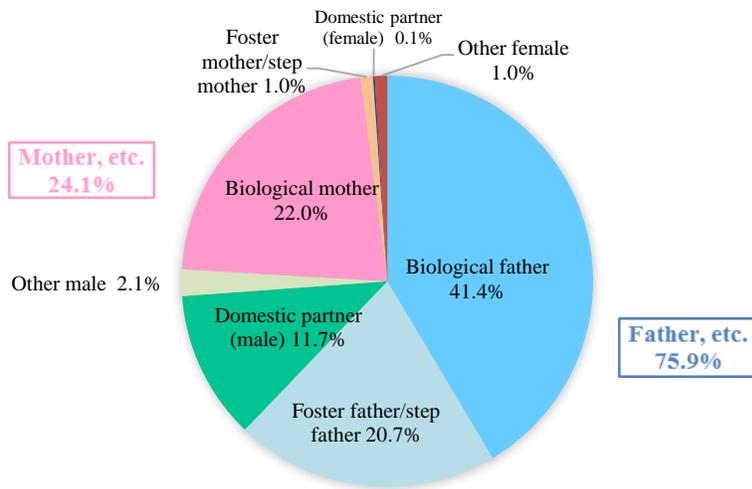
Source: National Police Agency

Number of arrests in child abuse



Source: National Police Agency

Relationship between perpetrator and victim in child abuse



Note: Other male and female indicate grandparents, uncle and aunt, or friend and acquaintance of parents who is acknowledged to be a guardian.
Source: National Police Agency

5 Collaboration for the Support of Traffic Victims

(1) Support for Traffic Victims

The Ninth Fundamental Traffic Safety Program (established in the Central Traffic Safety Countermeasure Council on March 31, 2011) states ‘enhancement of victim assistance’ as one of the pillars for traffic safety countermeasures, and seeks to promote support for traffic victims, their families and bereaved families (traffic victims). This section will introduce efforts on collaborative support for traffic victims.

(2) Traffic Victim Support Project

The Cabinet Office has implemented the Traffic Victim Support Project since 2003 in order to create an environment for the traffic victims to recover from their sadness and harsh experiences and move forward, as well as to protect their rights and benefits.

○ Opinion Exchange Meeting for Various Consultations

The purpose of the Opinion Exchange Meeting for Various Consultations is to verify the scope of practice of the traffic accident consultation center, police, and other related entities that support traffic victims in each region, and enhance communication and collaboration for effective public relations and enlightenment through lectures and opinion exchange of experts.

In 2014, it took place in Hokkaido, Shimane and Kochi Prefectures with the Social Welfare Council attending in addition to the existing participants.

○ Opinion Exchange Meeting for Children Who Lost Their Parents from Traffic Accidents

This meeting introduces a brochure “For the Support of Children Who Lost Their Parents from Traffic Accident” and promotes its active use and summarizes the issues and challenges of the support for such children at schools through actual cases (testimonies) and opinion exchange. It also serves to enhance collaboration of the related parties who support these children and their communications.

In 2014, an opinion exchange was made by participants after a lecture by an expert, and a speech by bereaved family members of a traffic accident with a participation of traffic victims and related organizations of child support in Tochigi and Okayama Prefectures.

Brochure “For the Support of Children Who Lost Their Parents from Traffic Accident”



○ **Self-Help Group Operation/Liaison Meeting**

The Self-help group operation/liaison meeting (a group of people who have the same purpose of supporting and encouraging each other among those who suffer the same problems to solve them and restore their peaceful life) supports self-help group activities for traffic victims to recover through lectures to reaffirm the needs for such group, information exchange on their efforts, lectures and workshops on the work on the psychological symptoms and treatment of the bereaved families and other necessary programs.

In 2014, it was implemented in Tokyo with the participation of support staff from Victim Support Center which belongs to the NPO National Victim Support Net-group and the representative from a group of traffic victims.

Column (5) Victim’s Notebook

The voluntary group “The Group to Think of Seamless Support with Victims” created a ‘victim’s notebook’ as there was a comment from crime victims saying, “If there is a suspect’s notebook for arrested people, we too want a victim’s notebook”.

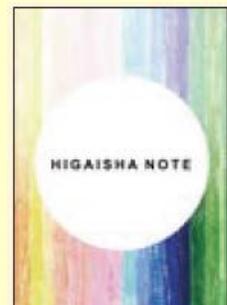
[What is a victim’s notebook?]

The victim’s notebook is a notebook in which crime victims and their family can fill in useful information that can be used later on. The Group to Think of Seamless Support with Victims interviewed crime victims on their experiences, and created the victim’s notebook in cooperation with the victims, attorneys, municipal employees, public health nurses, probation staff and media staff. Crime victims are under difficult circumstances, and the victims and their support staff who were involved in the creation of the victim’s notebook make an effort to spread the victim’s notebook while they are aware of the issues this notebook contains.

[Background for the need of the victim’s notebook]

Many places like the police, Public Prosecutor’s Office, court and local government offer support for crime victims. However, the support by such organizations and entities is disconnected from each other, hence there are many cases in which the crime victims themselves had to walk around looking for support while still being hurt and broken.

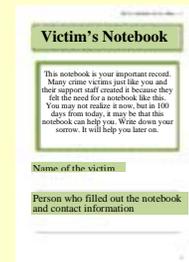
Victim’s Notebook (Cover)



Source: Group to Think of Seamless Support with Victims

For example, victims may have experienced having to find a hospital for their mental scars or mental symptoms caused by the crime, looking for an attorney who specializes in crime victim support, and finding a consultation desk to seek support for their housework and childcare, or taking their family members to a hospital due to various procedures they need to take after the incident. Even after they have reached the support, there is the case that they suffer secondary damage and still feel isolated due to not being able to consult with anyone.

Victim's Notebook (fill-in type)



Source: Group to Think of Seamless Support with Victims

[Distinctive features of the victim's notebook]

It is created with details taken from the voice of victims. It is a ring binder from which necessary pages can be taken to show other people and also to make copies, and the fonts are large and color-coded. Because there are some sections for which the victims have to recall their difficult experiences, some heart-warming illustrations are inserted for a break. There are comments made by crime victims and support staff who were involved in the making of the notebook, such as “There is a hope if you make it through the day. Do not give up living”, “The record of the ambulance service may be very useful to know the truth immediately after the crime”, “We want to help all of you who have this notebook in your hands as people who have been through the same”, or “Use any service to help you even in cleaning, laundry or grocery shopping”. These are the messages they want to send crime victims who have just been through crimes.

[Application of the victim's notebook]

The role of the victim's notebook does not end when it is handed out, but it is expected to extend through the process of recovery from the crime along with support staff. There are times when the victims cannot tell what needs to be solved while living the life that involves so many things every day. The notebook helps them to see what kind of help they need with a problem checklist or procedure checklist.

Crime victims had an independent life prior to the crimes. With the use of the victim's notebook, it is hoped for the support staff to relate with crime victims to find out what they want and how they want to be, so that the victims themselves make their own decisions.

*The Group to Think of Seamless Support with Victims is a voluntary group with a purpose to implement seamless support for crime victims to recover.