

Efforts of Private Entities

1. Private Entities in Japan

To help crime victims restore their peaceful life again after they receive harm, it is very important to support them according to their needs over a medium or long period continuously. Private entities can swiftly and sensitively handle the various needs of the crime victims, and they are essential to give continuous support in cooperation with the organizations and groups concerned.

At present, we have many different types of private entities that are working for the crime victims. They can be classified into the following categories in terms of the target crime victim types or their main activities.

- 1) Designated organizations aiding the early assistance organization for crime victims, etc.
- 2) Non profit Organization “National Network for Victim Support” (Alliance of 1)
- 3) Groups targeting to victims for specific crime type (other than the support groups of 1 and 2)
- 4) Organizations and Groups mainly comprising of the crime victims themselves.

Here we are giving a detailed introduction of the efforts of Group 1, which give support targeting general crime victims and it is typical organization type in Japan.

2. Groups to aid crime victims early on and them aiming to be designated these groups

Groups to aid crime victims early on are private entities that can reliably give adequate aid to the crime victims immediately after the crime. These groups are designated by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission. On being designated by the Commission, the above mentioned group can acquire information about a particular victim from the police department with the consent of the crime victim. Based on this information, the group may support the crime victims directly, right from the time the damage was inflicted by helping them in their daily activities of personal care etc, taking them to the hospital and court, helping them in kind, giving a loan or rendering services.

As of October 1, 2008, there are 20 designated groups in 20 prefectures, and 25 groups in 25 prefectures trying to be designated.

<Scene at the office of a member organization>
-Victim Support Center of Tokyo (Inc.)-



Services: Specified Non Profit Organization National Network for Victim Support

3. Actual Situation with Support

Some examples are cited here to give an introduction to the kind of actual support given by the above groups. These examples are given in reference to actual cases.

- Case 1 Direct support to a surviving family member of a homicide case-

This is the case of a surviving family member whose husband was unexpectedly murdered.

The criminal trial started after the institution of prosecution. We received information from the police in agreement of the surviving family that she desire to see the defendant who murdered her husband and to find out the truth even though it would be a hard time to be there.

Once we received the information, as a private victim support entity, we first accompanied her to the trial observation. It is really scary for anyone who is not familiar with a court to go there alone. The legal terminology is difficult to understand and a lot of people do not normally know how a trial proceeds. The person may feel lost in such a case and become more anxious. On being confronted with the accused, a lot of feelings well up to add to the trauma. That is why, we went with her, explained the court proceedings and took care that she did not come face to face with the accused while waiting in order to ease the mental strain. We extended our support by escorting her to the court for 3 months till the judgment was given.

During the trial period, going to the public prosecutors office to prepare for the statement of view or for meetings and recalling the case several times proves to be a harrowing experience for the her whose normal life is suddenly shattered. Hence we also accompanied her to the prosecutors office each time, explained the necessity to go there and tried to comfort her emotionally.

Also, she was undergoing severe mental trauma due to this incident, and unable to go to the hospital by herself. We extended our support by contacting and coordinating with a specialist upon her request and escorted her to the hospital also.

The economic pressure also increases on the surviving family. Many people are not aware of the support systems and the procedure to get support. That is why our first step was to explain the support system and then we helped her to apply for the benefit for crime victims. We took her to a knowledgeable attorney to help her claim for compensation of damages, contacted a lot of concerned institutions and organizations to extend their support with consideration of her will.

She needs a lot of time to recover. We are still supporting her through cooperation with the administrations, such as moving out from the house where the crime took place.

- Case 2 Support to a crime victim of sexual assault -

This is the case of a victim, who is a single mother of two children, whom we supported.

The subject is a rape victim whose house was broken into. After 3 months, the criminal was arrested in another case. It was found that 3 women were sexually assaulted and 2 women were sexually harassed by the criminal. Rape is a murder of the soul. It pains us to see the grief of a rape victim as women and human beings. We called her to the consultation office at the Center and listened to what she had to say. Our psychiatrist counseled her. We contacted and coordinated with the police and the public prosecutors office, accompanied her during the police interrogation and once the trial started, supported her in the trial including in attendance by proxy.

In this case, the victim worried that the rapist was not arrested for while and he might be come back to her house, so she thought of moving out. This was very difficult for her, because she lived in a municipal housing and she was not eligible to apply for some other municipal or prefectural housing while she did not have enough money to rent a private housing. But after serious and persistent requests to the Prefectural Housing Division, she was able to apply for prefectural housing. In the meantime, she continued to live under stress as she kept recalling the horrendous incident.

In addition, there was a worry about AIDS as the rapist had sexually assaulted several women, but the blood tests are very expensive. Since she was suffering from severe mental trauma, regular hospital visits were essential every month. According to the current system, the initial visit fee is charged at the first visit every month. She faced a tremendous economic burden because of this. In addition, the cost of transportation is also very high. The economic aid given to such victims is still inadequate and needs to be expanded.

Sexual abuse crushes human dignity and is a violation of human rights. The victim is in a continuous state of resentment, tension, self-denial and depression, so we feel it is really difficult for the victims to find themselves worth all over again.

4. The Importance of Private Entities

Organizations such as the administrative, judicial or medical institutions which give special support essentially provide limited assistance. But the private victim support entities, which are linked to the concerned institutions and organizations, can provide a comprehensive and meticulous support in the medium to long term perspective.

On the other hand, private entities have various financial and human resource problems and it is seen that the contents and quality of support given differs in each region.

The above mentioned issues were investigated by the “Investigative Commission for Cooperative Support” and “Investigative Commission for assistance for Private Entities”. (Refer to the Column on Page 17, ‘Final Summary of three Investigative Commissions’). At present on receiving the summary of the investigative commissions, the Government is creating a model plan of training curriculum which targets the supporters of private victim support entities. Further, to ensure that the institutions and organizations can coordinate and provide continuous and same level of support nationwide, support standard is being created. Currently the Government has gathered the experts from various fields to create a model plan for it.

Further, to promote the activities of private entities, public report and enlightenment is very important. In UK, which is much advanced in giving support to victims, there are many institutions which give donations to the private victims support entities in the form of Charity. But in Japan, it is difficult to gather enough donations or supporting members. The main reason may be that the concept of supporting victims is not yet understood widely.

The private entities and the Government should try to continuously promote understanding of crime support to the citizens, and with reference to the above mentioned training curriculum model plan, each organization should further improve the training and try to give the same level of support nationwide.

<Activities of Non Profit Organization National Network for Victim Support>

We are here for you

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NPO National Network for Victim Support

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相談対応、法律相談

生活困窮者支援学習

各種相談、自死相談、自殺相談

被害者支援グループへの援助

被害者支援活動に関する研修会開催

Reference: Non Profit Organization National Network for Victim Support pamphlet