

### 1. Private Entities in Japan

To help restore crime victim's peaceful life again after being harmed, 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) Groups to aid crime victims early on and those aiming to be designated that type of group
- 2) Nonprofit 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 those aiming to be designated that type of group

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 April 1st, 2009, there are 23 designated groups in 23 prefectures, and 23 groups in 23 prefectures trying to be designated.

### 3 Actual situation with support

The groups to aid crime victims early ons include "direct crime victim supporters" and "crime victim counselors" according to their experience and role.

The direct crime victim supporters and counselors are generally at least 25 years old and fulfill the following requirements:

- 1 Trusted socially with regard to their personality and behavior.
- 2 Possess the passion and time to implement their duty
- 3 Have stable lives
- 4 Are healthy and active

The crime victim counselors must also meet some of the following requirements:

- 1 Have at least 3 years experience in counseling crime victims.
- 2 Have at least 3 years experience in assisting crime victim counselors from a group to aid crime victims early on
- 3 Have at least the knowledge and skills to the same level as in preceding 2 items on counseling crime victims

As a concrete example the work a “crime victim counselor” working directly with crime victims is involved in a counselor was asked to report upon his/her week and how he/she felt when supporting victims.

To protect the privacy of the counselor the name of the group has not been provided.

### **A week of activities at a crime victim support center**

I began to be interested in supporting crime victims after watching a report on a crime victim that had been involved in a rather absurd affair. It led to discovering a volunteer recruitment advertisement in a local newspaper, after which I then took part in a training lesson at a victim support center. I now worked at a crime victim support center for 7 years.

I will present here a week of activities at the center to which I belong (The photos are (supplied by the nonprofit organization within the National Network for Victim Support) simulated).

#### **Monday**

I started telephone counseling at 10 o'clock in the morning. Another counselor and I were in front of the telephones waiting for a phone call when somebody called requesting counseling. The call came from a surviving family of a traffic accident victim. I carefully listened to him for 30 minutes and judged that he needed some technical legal knowledge, and hence I introduced him to the legal telephone counseling implemented by my center and made a reservation for an appointment for him.

As soon as I hang up the phone I received another phone call. This time it was from a victim whom I had been directly helping through attendance at the auditorium of the court and by examining witnesses several times. He reported to me that the punishment had become final and binding in a judgment made 2 weeks before because the accused did not appeal it and he stated that he felt relieved for the moment. Upon hearing this I too felt a little relieved as a counselor. But a civil suit is nearing and the accused will be released from prison someday. I wonder if the victim can find real of peace someday. I realize that as non government organization we play an important role in long-term continuous support.

#### **Tuesday**

I supported a surviving family of a traffic accident victim. Mrs. A (58 years old) lost her son, who was an office worker (25 years old), and will be questioning the accused through the victim participation system. We have been attending her in the auditorium of the trial since it first started. Today, as a crime victim counselor, I will enter the bar at the court to attend Mrs. A. She at first hesitated to participate in the court, but after attending parts of the trial she made up her mind to attend because she wanted the regret of her son losing his life due to sudden accident and the grief of a bereaved family to make the accused also feel regret too.

I felt the tension of Mrs. A when was attending the court as a victim participant. She was often at a loss for words because of her anger and sorrow but she did questions the accused, for example with “Why didn't you stop the car?” The answers of the accused were not necessarily sincere and I felt worried for her after thinking that it could deepen her sorrow. A phrase she stated to me after the trial deeply impressed me: “I felt very worried but I was able to do the best to appeal to my mind thanks to your attendance. I feel that I'm now capable of moving forward”.

However, her mind was deeply disturbed and she felt hurt so I considered introducing her to a psychiatrist and suggesting that she join a self-help group of bereaved families supported by our center.



At the court



A counselor attending a victim in the court gallery



A counselor attending a victim participating in a criminal trial



A counselor attending a victim witness

### **Wednesday**

I did some support activities for sex crime victims. It is often said that sex crimes are “murder of the soul”, and trample upon human dignity and taking away people’s human rights. I had a consultation with an office worker, Ms. B (29 years old). She feels lonely because after the crime she doesn’t like to meet other people, she feels dirty and lost, and that she doesn’t deserve to live and can’t go out anywhere anymore. She often can’t live a normal life through going shopping and working etc because of the effect of the crime. She was taking several days off, with the agreement of Ms. B, and hence I went to her workplace to provide an outline of the crime and her present condition to a director of her company, and asked him not to lay off her.

I thoroughly explained that she felt mentally stressed because of the effect of the crime, and that people’s lives can completely change because of a crime and that they can make people lose confidence in living in a safe and peaceful society. The director of the company listened to me with an air of disbelief and he didn’t accept my request with any understanding. I thought that an objective talk by a third party could help with the situation but it was not that easy. I keenly felt that people don’t understand sex crime victims yet. I will need to talk with her about what we need to do next.

### **Thursday**

I was involved in some support activities concerning an injury committed by a juvenile.

Last week I had a meeting under the auspice of the police to study some cooperation with the organization concerned. We can see that, in addition to the police, administrative organizations have been making positive efforts to develop support activities for victims since the Basic Plan for Crime Victims was established.

At meeting we studied concretely what each organization can do for victim C (16 years old) who was injured by a juvenile. After the meeting the police drew up a list of support proposed by each organization and the persons in charge, and then gave it to her parents. After taking a look of it her parents called me for a consultation and we made an appointment for an interview. Both her parents came to the first interview looking very nervous. But at the same time I felt how much her father cared about her mother. She was looking pale because of the fatigue of nursing her child and through nervousness. I thought that they needed a specialist's advice so I made an appointment for a legal consultation for them.



At a consultation

Today is legal consultation day in cooperation with attorneys at our support center. Her mother arrived by herself this time and she didn't look to be in as good a physical condition as last time because of nervousness and fatigue. After the consultation she went over it with me on a couch in a waiting room. She looked relaxed, and relieved of the tension she had during the consultation, and was a little calmer. I then proposed having a cup of herbal tea to her. While I was chatting with her I mentioned that her husband seemed very caring at the first consultation. As soon as I said to her that "he seemed very gentle" she blushed, probably because she was shy, but her expression then became milder. We then talked quite a lot. I felt relieved and glad while I watched her drinking her herbal tea. She said before going to the hospital, "I've never had the occasion to have a cup of tea and I haven't felt so much better for a long time."

For anyone involved in supporting victims the thanks of victims and their appearance getting better are the best reward and encouragement.

#### **Friday**

I was involved in some publicity activities. An expert counselor was invited to speak at a prefectural citizen lecture in front of 200 citizens on the need to support victims in order to foster better understanding of them. It is an important task to work at publicizing what we do to citizens to ensure that many people can understand us.

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This represents only part of the activities of a center that support victims are involved in, but I hope that it gives you a glimpse. Counselors at support centers are sometimes overcome with hard situations but they implement activities through being encouraged by victims recovering little by little.

It's hard to say that we are very well known in society yet but we do think that the presence of private entities supporting victims is indispensable in a society in which anyone can be a victim.

#### 4 Problems private entities face and future approaches.

Private entities implement detailed and comprehensive support from the mid-term and long-term points of view in cooperation with the other organizations and groups concerned with the importance of their roles being indicated in both the Basic Act and Basic Plan.

Private entities, however, do have various difficulties with regard to human resources and finance and it has been pointed out that the content and quality of the support they provide are not always relevant to the area they work from.

After taking these circumstances into consideration improving aid to private entities was exhaustively studied, and the above mentioned problems selected for examination at an “Investigative Commission for Cooperative Support” and an “Investigative Commission for Support for Private Entities”. In 2008 the final synthetic proposition of these meetings was used by Cabinet Office to draw up and propose a model proposition training curriculum targeting supporters working for crime victim support groups. The model proposition has 5 categories the knowledge and experience of supporters and proposes for the type of role expected, the abilities needed to play that role, the type of training needed if necessary to cultivate their abilities etc.

The model proposition was made on the basis of the knowledge and experience private entities have obtained to date but will be revised several times in ensuring that it meets the needs of crime victims and the real circumstances of the actual groups.

The expectation is that each group will draw up its own training curriculum while referring to the model proposition and that a certain level of support will then be secured throughout the entire country. Achieving this will require the help and cooperation of all the areas, not to mention the efforts of private entities. The Cabinet Office will continue to try to improve publicity and enlightenment efforts to ensure as many people as possible will understand the importance of supporting victims and to enable all of them to participate in supports in the way that he/she can.

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



Resource: Non-profit Organization National Network for Victim Support brochure