

Based on the Act related to the support of crime victims by payment of benefits for crime victims, with the National Public Safety Commission revealing a “guide on supporting crime victims” in October 2008. The guide has been used by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission and the police to support crime victims and the private entities that support them. This column will provide an outline of the guide.

1 Progress

“Act on Payment of Benefits for Crime Victims” was revised in 2001 and its name modified to the “Act related to the payment of benefits for crime victims” with new provisions concerning support for crime victims being established. More concretely, it defines that measures to help crime victims can be considered the duty of the chief constable of the police headquarters and also that the National Public Safety Commission should determine a guide to ensure the measures are taken in an appropriately valid way. Based on this, a “guide to implement aid for crime victims by the chief constable of police headquarters” was then enacted in 2002.

In 2008 the name of the Act was revised again to an “Act related to the support of crime victims by payment of benefits for crime victims” (abbreviation: Crime Victim Support Act” and provisions concerning the promotion of activities of private entities supporting crime victims then arranged. The content defines that measures to promote the activities of private entities are the duty of the Prefectural Public Safety Commission and also that the National Public Safety Commission should determine a guide to ensure the measures are taken in an appropriately valid way.

The National Public Safety Commission united the guide made in 2002 with a new guide that became indispensable because of revision of the Act in 2008 and in order to establish a “guide on supporting crime victims” in October 2008.

2 Composition of the guide

The guide is used by the Nation Public Safety Commission to ensure that the following measures are taken in an appropriately valid way based on the Crime Victim Support Act:

- Measures in providing information and other help to be implemented by the chief constable of police headquarters toward crime victims
- Measures such as advice on promoting initiative activities by private entities in supporting crime victims to be implemented by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission

With these instructions that need to be respected when supporting crime victims, which are basic common items to both measures, are defined as well as instructions that need to be respected when the chief constable of police headquarters help them, those that need to be respected when the Prefectural Public Safety Commission puts into practice measures in promoting initiative activities by private entities in supporting crime victims and the concrete content of the measures to take.

3 Outline of the guide

(1) Basic items concerning support for crime victims

The following instructions are defined as the basic items to be respected when putting into practice support for crime victims.

A. Care for the individual dignity of a crime victim

Respecting the dignity of a crime victim as a member of society and ensuring implementation of the support they deserve.

B. Understanding on the situation in which crime victims are in

Correctly and concretely understanding the individual situation of crime victims and being careful to any changes in them in implementing the appropriate support according to the individual situation.

C. Implementation of support adapted to the needs of crime victims

Implementation of the appropriate support adapted to the needs of crime victims while keeping always in mind what they expect and what they need.

D. Relief of crime victims early on

Continuous support from right after the occurrence of a crime, prevention of crime victims from suffering from serious mental shock in the future, reducing their pain, and promoting the recovery of crime victims

E. Positive approaches by persons involved in support

Positive actions by proposing timely appropriate support according to the progress of crime victims from the side of supporters by not only waiting for a request from a crime victim.

F. Provision of information and appropriate explanations to crime victims

Information about the base used to support crime victims such as criminal procedures and the various support systems, and the provision of the necessary information in a timely manner according to the individual situation. Moreover, the provision of information and appropriate positive explanations concerning the general problems that crime victims face and the mental state they tend to be in.

G. Prevention of so-called secondary damage

Adequate care with human rights and the mental state of crime victims, persons with technical knowledge on support to be in charge of support for them, and the prevention of them secondary damage through arranging the facilities they need.

H. Care with privacy

Adequate care with the privacy of crime victims in order to prevent them secondary damage due to surrounding people's behavior and reports and news released by the press and not disturbing the honor and peace of mind of crime victims.

I. Securing the safety of crime victims

Adequate measures in secure their safety and dissolving the inquietude of crime victims in preventing them from falling victims again.

J. Care with the mental impact on those involved in support

Adequate care while keeping in mind that those involved in support can suffer from extremely serious stress.

K. Continuous support

Implementation of continuous activities in ensuring that all crime victims can receive appropriate continuous support when and where they need even if the systems and organizations in charge do change

L. Organic collaboration between private entities that support crime victims and the police

Through mutual recognition of the partition of roles and ways of contacting each other the implementation of a continuous and organic collaboration between the police in charge of support for crime victims from right after a crime and private entities supporting crime victims that can put into practice detailed continuous support according to the individual situation of crime victims to which public organizations such as the police can't respond.

(2) Items regarding aid provided by the chief constable of police headquarters

In addition to (1) the following items also regard instructions to be respected when the chief constable of police headquarters implement aid.

A. Recognition of the role played by the police in aiding crime victims

As the police are usually in touch with a crime victim right after a crime has occurred they can be considered the closest organization to them. The principal role in relieving crime victims early on in particular.

B. Base used to manage systems concerning aid for crime victims

Improving the systems to ensure that the measures of each section of the police relating aid for crime victims can be exercised to the maximum effect and the implementation of detailed support for crime victims from their point of view in cooperation with all the sections while making full use of the various Acts concerned.

Adequate care that investigations are not an excessive burden on crime victims and securing the balance of the various types of categories, missions, and projects with regard to the management and administration of systems managed by the police through efficient arrangement of staff, measures and materials etc.

C. Grasping the status of implementation of the various types of measures

Regular and precise examination of the status with implementation of the various types of measures and their effect.

D. Arrangement of basis for implementing aid

Implementation of accurate instructions and training on support for crime victims toward police officers. Arrangement of systems, facilities, and materials necessary in supporting crime victims

E. Collaboration of prefectural police, organizations and groups concerned

Mutual cooperation of the prefectural police, sections, and police stations concerned, cooperation and collaborations with organizations and groups concerned as well as private entities supporting crime victims.

F. Improved provision of information and counseling system for crime victims

Improved acquisition of knowledge on the various systems used by staff counseling crime victims, distribution of brochures introducing the various systems at counseling windows and ensuring quick certain care is provided by the organizations and groups concerned. The dispatch of female police officers to counseling windows regarding sex crimes so that crime victims can talk in peace, the implementation of telephone counseling by counseling specialists and the introduction of organizations where they can follow specialist care such as that provided by psychiatrists or clinical psychologists.

G. Prevention of secondary damage in the process of investigation

Prevention of people secondary damage, care on reducing the mental burden during investigations, and protection of the privacy of crime victims. Taking requests from crime victims into consideration, close attention paid to the age, sex, family situation of crime victims, and circumstances of the crime and social impact etc.

H. Activities in publicity and enlightenment in supporting crime victims taken by the police

In view of the importance of the publicity and enlightenment activities concerning support for crime victims the organizations concerned and private entities that support them shall implement them in mutual cooperation.

I. Securing the safety of crime victims

Promotion of measures to prevent victims from falling victim again through crime prevention instructions and precautions.

(3) Instructions provided by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission

In addition to (1) the following items are also instructions to be respected when the Prefectural Public Safety Commission implements measures in promoting initiative activities being made by private entities that support crime victims.

A. Respect for the autonomy of private entities that support crime victims

Activities of private entities to support crime victims are usually voluntary and deep-rooted in local communities in cooperation and collaboration with the other organizations concerned. Private entities that support crime victims therefore need to have their autonomy respected as being independent organizations.

B. Cooperation with organizations and groups concerned

Crime victims have a great variety of needs and the content of the support needed can change over time, thus making it difficult for a single organization to fulfill all those needs. A variety of organizations and groups supporting crime victims are needed to play mutually complementary roles and intensify cooperation through improvement and reinforcement of it in ensuring crime victims can receive continuous support even if the systems and organizations do change.

C. Thorough confidentiality

In preventing crime victims secondary damage adequate care needs to be taken with the privacy of crime victims revealed in support activities and thorough confidentiality maintained.

(4) Concrete measures to be taken by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission

The content of concrete measures to be taken by the Prefectural Public Safety Commission in order to promote initiative activities of private entities that support crime victims includes the following items:

A. Improving of knowledge of those engaged in support

The following measures are to be implemented for private entities supporting crime victims in order to train their staff in the knowledge and skills needed to help crime victims recover their mental health.

- Provision of information on the real situation of crime victims
- Provision of information on cases useful in supporting crime victims
- Provision of information on instruction to be respected when attempting to prevent people from secondary damage and to support crime victims.
- Advices on training curriculums for those engaged in supporting crime victims
- Dispatch of speakers for training those engaged in supporting crime victims

B. Improved and reinforced cooperation between the organizations and groups concerned

The following measures are to be taken for private entities supporting crime victims in order to improve and reinforce the cooperation between the organizations and groups concerned:

- Provision of information on support content proposed by other administrative organizations
- Support for training of coordinators
- Provision of information to groups to aid crime victims early on

C. Improvement of human and material basis

In view of the actual situation that most private entities supporting crime victims have problems such as financial, inadequate human resource and the need to train staff and fill in gaps in activities in areas etc, the following are required:

- Financial aid

In partnership with local governments attempt to implement proper financial aid as much as possible

- Rental of facilities and materials

Local governments will need to be helped to promote cooperation in utilization of facilities and government office buildings in order that offices can be supplied as a base for the activities of private entities supporting crime victims, with the necessary facilities and being rentable when implementing activities.

- Support in establishment

The provision of information, promotion of the cooperation of local governments and the necessary advice according to each step of the establishment of a group or designation of a group to aid crime victims early on.

D. Promotion of publicity and enlightenment activities of private entities supporting crime victims

Promotion of publicity and enlightenment activities of private entities supporting crime victims through the proposition of various opportunities to implement those activities.