

Initiatives of Supporters clubs

Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center (MDMHCC)

Stem Center / Coordination Division

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1. Introduction

“Supports clubs” are projects that dispatch supporters club registrants (referred to hereafter as “supporters”) as needed for no compensation to municipalities, regions, and institutions that request support from the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center (henceforth, “Center”). Supporters include specialists (e.g., doctors, public health nurses, nurses, psychiatric social workers, social workers, occupational therapists, clinical psychologists, nursery teachers, etc.) who have a variety of skills relating to mental health welfare. This project was initiated in collaboration with mental health welfare specialists affiliated with associated organizations. Immediately after the opening of the center, specialists such as doctors, psychiatric social workers, and public health nurses came to provide support from all over the country in day shifts. The number of registrants already is at 70 individuals. Currently, we are continuing initiatives centering on prefectural residents with the collaboration of around ten supporters.

2. FY 2015 activity report

(1) The number of supporters

In FY 2015, eight supporters were involved in the municipality- and Center-sponsored projects.

(2) Content of activities

Supporters operated the day camp and conduct resident support activities in municipalities (Yamamoto Town, Tagajo City).

① Cooperation with day camp operation

We implemented a day camp for local elementary school students and their parents in the coastal suburbs of Sendai City but supporters participated as day staff for the outdoor activities, recreation, psychological education, and stress care programs.

② Cooperation with resident support in municipalities

Supporters cooperated with health consultation meetings for temporary housing residents and health support centered on visits to victims.

A. Yamamoto Town

We dispatched supporters to health consultation meetings for container type temporary housing residents conducted by the Yamamoto town support center as part of the city’s health/lifestyle support initiatives for victims. Health consultation meetings with supporters were conducted from May to September in container type temporary housing meeting halls, which led to individual consultations.

B. Tagajo City

We dispatched individual support to residents at high health risk as part of Tagajo city’s health/lifestyle support initiatives for victims. Center staff and supporters collaborated to provide resident support.

The focus of the project was to visit residents who were at high health risk and to confirm their health and housing status. Here, supporters advised them to connect with specialized consultation institutions as necessary and to effectively respond to various post-disaster stresses and difficulties, as well as support them on lifestyle aspects. Also, supporters provided secretarial support such as the data collection of information relating to resident health (Table 1).

Table 1 Content of supporter activities (FY 2015)

Project Manager	Category	Content	Professions	Form	Number	Days
Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center	Operation cooperation (sponsored project)	Day staff at day camp (outdoor activities, recreation, psychological education, relaxation)	Doctor Nursery teachers Psychiatric social worker	Single	6	1
Yamamoto Town	Resident health support	Health support for walk-in consultations (for temporary housing residents)	Occupational therapist	Series	1	13
Tagajo City	Resident health support	Visits (for high-risk residents the following survey) Office work	Nurse	Series	1	24

3. Future activities

A major point for the role that supporters have fulfilled was to respond to regional needs as rapidly as possible and to fill in the gaps of insufficient support. Day camps required several staff members to provide detailed support to participants. By having specialists such as child psychiatrists, nursery teachers, and psychiatric social workers as supporters here, we were able to arrange a system to support the mental changes in children and provide an environment in which parents could participate in a relaxed manner. Additionally, resident support in municipalities demanded that we provide locations where residents can consult with us in a relaxed manner and respond to visiting activities. Residents who live in container type temporary housing for long periods have high levels of stress and many feel left behind or hopeless. We are concerned about situations where individuals cannot (or do not) request support for themselves and the resident support projects in municipalities demanded that we provide support for individuals whose desire for assistance has decreased. And so, it is thought that we were able to more rapidly check on the status of residents with high health risk and provide consultation support by having specialists who understand these regional situations very well as supporters in these contexts.

The current status is such that few specialists can be recruited to address needs centered on resident support. Future developments will likely need to use our center staff and supporters to fill in the gaps of support until regional care workers become sufficiently trained.