

Regarding the Initiatives of Supporters Club Members

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1. Introduction

The “Supporters Club Members” is a project in which supporters club registrants (hereinafter referred to as supporters) are dispatched free of charge from Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center (hereinafter referred to as the center) to local governments, regions, and institutions who have requested support. Supporters are professionals who have acquired various skills related to mental health (doctors, public health nurses, nurses, psychiatric social workers, social workers, occupational therapists, clinical psychologists, nursery school teachers). The project was implemented in cooperation with specialists in fields such as mental health belonging to associated organizations.

2. FY2014 Activity Report

(1) Number of Activities

In FY2014, eight supporters (nine people cumulatively) worked in local governments and other programs sponsored by the center. Of the eight supporters, two were new and the other six had experience working as supporters in FY2013. The total number of activity days was 16, of which 12 days were consultations and one-on-one consultation activities.

(2) Contents of Activities

The activities included one-day activities and those performed continuously for a certain period (Table 1). These activities included a day camp project by the center (for parents and children in the affected areas), health consultations, and lecturers at workshops. Ongoing activities included consultations and one-on-one consultations, and professional staff were dispatched at the request of the local government.

Table 1 Supporters' Dispatch Destinations and Activities (FY2014)

Support Content	Details	Job Position	Dispatch Destination
Workshop Lecturer	Tapping touch workshop (target: professionals, supporters)	Psychiatric social worker	Kesennuma City
One-on-one consultations	Targeted towards container type temporary housing residents One-on-one consultations at health consultation meetings	Occupational therapist	Yamamoto Town
Consultations	Advice to public health nurses and family counselors from a professional standpoint	Clinical psychologist	Iwanuma City
Project Management and Organization	Helping with day camp management on the day of the event (target: elementary school students and their parents in affected areas)	Doctor Psychiatric social worker	Our center
Consultations after health surveys	Post health survey consultations with Social Welfare Council staff	Psychiatric social worker	Our center

(3) Ongoing Activities

This section is based on the reports of Supporters club members, Yuki Yasui and Maki Suzuki.

Yasui worked on consultations with mothers and children in Iwanuma City and provided advice to public health nurses and family counselors who struggle in clinical practices, such as considering intervention methods for consultation cases, assessing the degree of risk, and confirming cooperation. Although there were few consultations by affected residents, there were consultations regarding children raised in dysfunctional families. During the activities, it was necessary to be aware of the cooperation between people involved in consultation support in "strategic meetings" and to support the supporters so that they could maintain a relationship with the target individuals without giving up.

Suzuki worked on one-on-one consultations at health consultation meetings for container type temporary housing residents in Yamamoto Town, handling resident health consultations, and providing support to the center staff with skills to help prepare for health consultations and promote health. The residents' visit for health checks was considered to be relatively maintained. Although there was a tendency towards increased weight and blood pressure, many people were concerned about their health and were supervised by medical institutions to control their symptoms. We also felt as though residents considered health counseling as a place where they could talk.

3. Regarding Future Activities

At the start of these activities, supporters engaged in short-term support activities for several days to several weeks with the staff at the center and played the role of logistical support with the center as an adaptable cooperator. However, as the needs of the region have changed over time, a more continuous response has become necessary. Watanabe¹⁾ commented on the change in needs requested to the center after the Great East Japan Earthquake: "...in the first year, there was a strong tendency to prioritize human resources, and in the second-year long-term dispatch became desirable. It was necessary to respond appropriately to such changes in the situation," saying that more ongoing support was required.

In the FY2014 initiatives, there was a request for the dispatch of professional staff who could continuously address local issues. Originally, there were not many professionals with the experience and skills to meet the needs of the region, and there was no system to make up for the lack of professionals. Under these circumstances, the dispatched supporters of the Supporters Club were able to meet some of the mental health needs of the municipalities. This is evident from the fact that continuous and regular cooperation of professional staff is required in FY2015. It will be important to respond to immediate needs in the future.

After the earthquake, we realized the importance of "connections between people." In particular, we were encouraged and assisted by the relationships and networks that had been cultivated before the earthquake. We think that many people have realized that good relations and efforts during peaceful times are useful in unique situations such as disasters.

The Supporters Club Members is a mechanism to recruit people who provide support for the mental health and welfare of the community and to utilize them where support is needed. If such a system can be established as something that can be used daily, the supporters' club approach may become one of the networks that support the community. If such a system can be established as something that can be used daily, the Club's efforts may become one of the networks that support communities.

Citations / References

- 1) Yuichi Watanabe. The Planning Division's Initiatives and Future Issues, Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center Bulletin, 1st Edition, 2013, 72-78 [in Japanese]