

Projects for Alcohol-Related Problems in FY 2017

Takao Ohira - President

Non-Profit Organization Miyagi Prefecture Danshukai

Introduction

Seven years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. The reconstruction of houses has allowed many to move from emergency temporary housing to disaster public housing. However, the physical, psychological, and social problems caused by this disaster continue to grow ever more serious.

We of the Miyagi Prefecture Danshukai believe it to be quite possible that in a disaster-affected region, the various problems survivors have to bear and their inability to be sure about their futures might lead to the worsening of alcohol-related problems. Thus, we have worked in collaboration with the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center (hereafter, "Mental Health Care Center") and governmental/medical organizations to undertake various projects related to our establishment of programs to educate the public on alcohol abuse and to hold regular temperance meetings.

1. Outline of Activities in Each Prefectural Region

(1) Regular Temperance Meetings in the Motoyoshi Area of Kesennuma City.

<Visitations temporary housing ⇒ meetings to discuss temperance ⇒ regular meetings of the Danshukai>

After the disaster, in FY 2012, we began to get involved in alcohol abuse awareness and the formation of a Danshukai in the Motoyoshi area of Kesennuma City. Thanks to the passionate discussions of participants and the contributions of other individuals affiliated with the project, in May 2014, we were able to change our little "Talks about Temperance" meetings into regular temperance meetings—the Motoyoshi regular meeting—overseen by the prefectural Danshukai and held on the third Monday of every month. Since then, we continued to hold these meetings once per month through FY 2017. We were also generously gifted the use of the volunteer room at the Motoyoshi Health and Welfare Center, "Rest," by the Motoyoshi General Branch.

The attendees of these meetings included the participants and their families who had attended the previous "Talks on Temperance" meetings, public health nurses, local medical organization affiliated personnel, the Mental Health Care Center, the social welfare council, and staff from the Tohokukai Hospital Community Support Division. Some came all the way from Sendai.

(2) Ishinomaki Alcohol-Related Problems Training Session

In February 2015, we began this project in collaboration with governmental and medical officials as a part of the post-disaster alcohol-related problem countermeasures enacted by the Ishinomaki City, Kahoku Town General Branch Office. We met on the second Thursday of each month at the Kahoku General Branch Office Health Center, and used the regular temperance meeting model, with the addition of the comparison of guidelines and examples.

Attendees include participants and their families, the Mental Health Care Center, governmental officials, local support organization staff, and staff from the Tohokukai Hospital. These people discussed their feelings and thoughts, and more than 15 people turned out to each meeting. Valuable experiences were had, including the meeting of new friends in a new place, and new relationships through deep mutual support. In our discussions of our directions for FY 2017, we brought up the idea of selecting a location easier for participants and their families to access and realizing future "lunchtime meetings" for the Danshukai. Additionally, given the rise in the number of individuals suffering from alcohol-related problems in the Ishinomaki area and the worsening effect the move into disaster public housing may have on their problems, we changed our meeting place in May 2017 to the "Conference Room" of the Ishinomaki City Health Counseling Center. Throughout FY 2017, the

Ishinomaki City Alcohol-Related Problems Training Sessions were held on the second Thursday of every month. They continued to be based on the regular temperance meetings model, and included comparisons of guidelines and examples, as well as honest discussion of each participant's self.

(3) Natori Area Regular Temperance Meetings

This project, begun in March 2015, happened in response to increasing demand for regular temperance meetings in Natori City, Iwanuma City, and Watari Town.

In FY 2015, we met at 2 PM on the second Monday of every month in the Natori City Health Center. In line with our theme of "Let's listen to the stories of people who have stopped drinking alcohol," we began by first listening to the personal stories of participants. At the time, the project was primarily overseen by the local government, with the Danshukai participating in a cooperative capacity.

In FY 2016, we held "Meetings for Temperance" (every second Monday) in a similar fashion, with the local government as the primary organizer and the Danshukai cooperating.

After discussions regarding the nature of the project moving forward into FY 2017, we decided in April 2017 to shift to adherence to an original goal of the project since its founding: Regular meetings of the Danshukai. Natori City provided us with a conference room on the second floor of the Natori City Health Center as a venue for our activities, and we began to hold regular Natori area temperance meetings every month. Attendees included local participants and their families, Natori City Health Center employees, Mental Health Care Center staff, public health nurses from the Iwanuma City Social Welfare Council, and Tohokukai Hospital Community Support Staff.

2. Looking Forward

We of the Miyagi Prefecture Danshukai believe that our activities are yet insufficient in comparison to the extent of the damage caused by the disaster. However, we strongly affirm our duty as participants in our collaborative groups to "continue speaking about experiences and recover together."

Looking forward, we plan to strengthen our relationships with governmental and medical officials and heighten the mutual trust between ourselves and the supporters who work so tirelessly in the difficult conditions present in disaster regions. We wish to end this report with an affirmation of the fervent hope that our efforts may lessen even slightly the plight of those affected by alcohol-related problems.