

Chapter 2 Reviewing working styles to support balance between work and family

Section 1 Promoting Further Measures in Companies

1. Promoting Efforts to Support Nurturing of the Next Generation by Business Owners

- The ratio of companies with more than 300 regular employees of whom notification was required to be made in the general employee action plan according to the Next Generation Law was 98.0% as of the end of December 2008, while the number of companies with 300 such employees or less was 16,405.
- In 2008, part of the Next Generation Nurturing Support Measures Promotion Law is being planned to be revised and enforced. The main revision matters related to the Action Plan of General Business operators are as follows:
 - (1) Targets obliged to formulate and present the Action Plan of General Business operators were expanded from businesses with 301 or more workers to ones with 101 or more workers (enforced on April 1, 2011).
 - (2) Regarding the businesses obliged to formulate and present the Action Plan of General Business operators, it was made compulsory to publish the abovementioned plan and make it known to all workers (enforced on April 1, 2009).

2. Promotion of Family-Friendly Companies

- Awards from the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and Chief of the Prefectural Labour Office were given to family-friendly companies in order to fully publicize them, while praising the companies which employ various policies to balance work and child-care/family-care and make efforts to allow workers to choose from among various working styles.

Section 2 Promoting the Child-Care Leave System

1. Promote and Enhance a System to Balance Work and Child-care

- The Subdivision of the Employment Equality of the Labour Policy Council discussed reviewing the Child and Long-Term Care Leave Law, and then in December 2008 proposals were made by the Council, such as: (1) making compulsory short-time working systems and irregular work exemptions, (2) extending leave periods in case of both father and mother needing child care leave, and (3) improving child nursing leave and establishing a short-term leave system for long-term care. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare based on those proposals is making efforts toward reviewing the Child Care and Long-term Care Leave Law. In addition, as a temporary measure from October 2007, it was decided that the provision rate of child care leave benefits for supporting and promoting employment continuation shall be raised from 40% to 50% of pre-leave wages.

2. Maintenance of a Convenient Employment Environment for Working Together with Child-raising

- Since April 2007 on a Grant for Promoting Child Care Leave Acquisition etc has been provided to business operators who have independently provided economic support to persons needing child care leave and so forth. The “Living Measures” formulated in October 2008 provides that in case of the first person appearing that has acquired child care leave, the range of objects supplied with grants for small business operators shall be expanded to the 5th person and the amount of grants of the 2nd person or later increased (child care leave: from 600,000 to 800,000 yen).

In addition, regarding grants for small business operators to pay expenses of child care services used by workers, the rate and maximum amount of grants were increased (the rate: from 1/2 to 3/4, the amount: from 300,000 to 400,000 yen (per capita), from 3.6 to 4.8 million yen (per business operator))

Section 3 Program for Father Participation in Child-care

- Since 2005, participation of the father in child-care has been promoted by assisting business operators who make model efforts to create a workplace that enables father participation in child-care. In addition, in order to promote awareness improvements of men's harmony of work and child care, a handbook for designing and practicing ways of working enabling men to harmonize work and child care named "Fathers' Work-Life Balance: We Support Papas Harmonizing Work and Child Care!" was just created and distributed in fiscal 2008.

Section 4 Environmental Adjustments such as Reduced Working Hours to Achieve Work-Life Balance

1. Promoting the Concept of Work-Life Balance

- Based on the "Work-Life Balance Charter" and "Action Guidelines For Promoting Work-Life Balance", various efforts are being developed, mainly by the "Work-Life Balance Promotion Office" established in the Cabinet Office in January 2008, but in cooperation with the national government, workers, employers and local authorities. In addition, from November in the same year on activities aiming at improving national efforts have been developed through collecting and disseminating as excellent role models the results obtained by visiting businesses making advanced efforts. In addition, in June the same year, under a catch phrase of "Let's change our ways of working!", the "Change! Japan" campaign was being developed.

2. Efforts toward Work-Life Balance such as Reducing Long Working Hours and Granting Annual Paid Leave,

- In order to achieve the target of making it possible to work while securing enough living time as well as reducing long labor hours, the "Law to Amend Part of the Labor Standards Law" was enacted in December 2008. From fiscal 2010 forth, extra wages for overtime work exceeding 60 hours per month shall be raised from the current 25% to 50%. Regarding annual leave, the current system allows it to be acquired on a daily basis, but after the conclusion of a labor-management agreement annual leave shall be enabled to be acquired on an hourly basis for a maximum of 5 days.

3. Promotion of Various Working Styles Corresponding to Life Style

- In recent years, the number of part time workers, and the number of them playing a key role in the office rather than the past assistant role has been increasing. However, sometimes their work and contributions are not evaluated properly or reflected in their working conditions. It is becoming a challenge to resolve the difference of unreasonable working conditions compared to regular employees and to secure appropriate working conditions that recognize their work and contribution. The Revised Part Time Working Law, which promotes part-timer working conditions in equilibrium with those of regular workers according to their actual working status and their transfers to regular workers, was enacted in May 2007.
- Regarding the system of regular workers with reduced working hours, it is anticipated that it will realize various working styles corresponding to each individual's life style and life stages. Efforts to support the introduction of the system are being carried out by providing grants to business operators who actually introduce the system, while at the same time opening "Introduction Support Navi of the System of Regular Workers with Reduced Working Hours" on the internet, providing them with information such as the outline and cases of efforts.

4. Promotion of Tele-Commuting

- The government has been working in unison to promote tele-commuting, looking to increase the number of tele-commuters by 2010 up to 20% of the working population, while formulating the Action Plan for Doubling Tele-commuters (approved at the Liaison Conference of Related Ministries and Agencies on Promotion of Tele-Commuting and approved by the IT Strategy Headquarters) in May 2007.
- Among the tele-commuting works, regarding the working style where a person having employment relationship with his/her business operator is working at home for all or a part of the working hours, promotion projects are being performed through tele-commuting trial, and experience project, support using the Tele-commuting Environment Maintenance Tax System and holding seminars.

5. Review of Civil Servants' Working Style

- Based on the recommendation by the National Personnel Authority in August FY 2008, work hours of the national government public officers were reduced by 15 minutes per day and 1 hour 15 minutes per week (Enforced on April 1, 2009). In addition, regarding the reduction of overtime work, according to a report on civil servant personnel management presented at the same time as the abovementioned recommendation, the problem of reducing working hours at workplace must be tackled with a view to balancing work life and family life, for which planned government effort is necessary.
- The Bill to revise part of the regional civil servants law and the law on recruitment of general fixed-term employees in local governments, which are designed to bring in various working styles, has established a system for fixed-term working staff with short working hours and work is underway to consolidate it.

6. Balancing Support in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery

- Symposiums are held, examples of child-raising support activities in agriculture, forestry and fishery villages are given, and information on people participating in child-raising support are provided in agriculture, forestry and fishery villages to reduce the burden on women during maternity and the child-raising period.

Section 5 Developing a Working Environment where Women with Children can Continue Working Easily

- Under the Equal Employment Opportunities Act, prejudicial handling due to pregnancy or child-raising is prohibited. The Act also states that the dismissal of a woman during pregnancy or within one year after the delivery is invalid unless the business operator proves that the reason for the dismissal is not because of her having a child. Business operators that violate this law are given guidance in order to rectify the situation.

Section 6 Promoting Re-Employment

- As of FY 2007, Mother's Salons (one each in 36 prefectures) have been established at main Hello Work centers in the prefectures that do not yet have a Mother's Hello Work center, and detailed support for finding employment has been provided to those who wish to early start working again together with raising a child.
- Re-employment of women who have left their jobs temporarily for child-raising and support for starting a business are promoted through the general support information portal, Supporting Active Women (Josei Ikiki Ouen Navi), while developing a course that provides information for women ready to retake challenges by cooperating with the local government supporting the child-raising.