Special Feature: Activities to Develop Young People in Local Communities

1 Introduction
- The local community is the place where children and young people come in contact with many different people, learn various things and live together, thus playing a key role in developing young people.
- This section presents the current state of youth centers (and their efforts), which have been established in local communities to carry out activities for developing young people, such as counseling, protection, and the prevention of delinquency. Activities of individuals and NPOs that are engaged in developing youth in local communities are also described.

2 Youth Center
(1) What is a youth center?
- Youth centers (such as juvenile guidance centers, youth development centers, youth guidance centers, youth counseling centers and youth centers (hereinafter referred to as “Centers”)) are the institutions established in cities, towns and villages across the country with the aim of developing young people.
- These centers provide counseling for children, young people and their guardians about their worries such as bullying, truancy and delinquency. The centers also conduct street guidance activities1 for young people who have fallen into delinquency and misbehavior. In addition, according to the actual situation of each community, the centers perform various activities such as “cleaning up” harmful environments2, holding various events for publicity and awareness, supporting employment and providing places for young people.

(2) Overview
1) Number of Centers
- As of 2013, there are 703 Centers across the country. The number of the Centers has remained largely unchanged since the 2000s (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Number of youth centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The staff at the Centers gives advice and guidance to young people who have fallen into delinquency and misbehavior, such as smoking, drinking or loitering in the middle of the night, around entertainment districts, stations and parks. If necessary, they inform guardians, schools and the police in order to give these young people a helping hand before they get into a serious situation.

2 This refers to the elements in the social environment that are considered to be harmful to the healthy development of young people. These include publications and various media that could strongly stimulate sexual urges or encourage violence and cruelty as well as amusement facilities and adult entertainment businesses that provide sensual pleasure in the middle of the night.
2) **Staff**

Most of the staff is regular staff (39.8%) and part-time staff (35.8%) from local municipalities. There are also a small numbers of teaching staff (5.3%) and police staff (1.6%) in some Centers (Figure 2).

3) **Number of juvenile officers**

Juvenile officers are commissioned by local municipalities to perform street guidance activities and counseling activities; contact or notify families, schools and the police of young people taken into protective custody; “clean up” environments and conduct publicity work.

In FY 2012, approximately 60,000 juvenile officers worked at the Centers (Figure 3).
4) **Activities**

- Many activities are related to the prevention of delinquency, such as counseling activities (71.1%), guidance activities (65.4%) and “cleaning up” harmful environments (61.5%). Half of all the Centers perform activities for publicity and awareness (59.9%) (Figure 4).
- They also provide support for learning and rehabilitation (22.3%) and employment support (10.1%).
- There are 31 Centers in the country (4.4%) that are performing all of these activities.

5) **Comprehensive Counseling Centers for Children and Young People based on the Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People**

- Forty-five Centers (6.4%) out of all 703 Centers in the nation are positioned as Comprehensive Counseling Centers for Children and Young People based on Article 13 of the Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People.
- Almost all of these Centers (97.8%) conduct counseling activities. Compared to all the Centers as a whole, a high percentage of these Comprehensive Counseling Centers provide rehabilitation support and employment support (Figure 5).

![Figure 4 Activities (percentage of Centers that perform each activity)](image1)

![Figure 5 Activities of Comprehensive Counseling Centers for Children and Young People](image2)

Source: Surveyed by the Cabinet Office
Note: Multiple answers allowed

6) **Number of counseling cases**

- There were approximately 220,000 counseling cases as a whole in FY 2011. Compared to 2000, about 10 years previous, the number of counseling cases has increased by approximately 50,000 while the number of Centers has remained largely unchanged (Figure 6 (1)).
- Counseling sought by people with problems (42.0%) accounts for the largest percentage, followed by their families (32.8%), and then their schools (15.6%) (Figure 6 (3)).
7) **Street guidance**

There were approximately 180,000 cases of street guidance in FY 2011. The number has been on the decline for the past 30 years, and the rate of decline has increased in recent years (Figure 7).

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**Figure 6** The state of counseling activities

(1) Number of counseling cases

(2) Means of counseling (FY 2011)

(3) Clients (FY 2011)

Source: Surveyed by the Cabinet Office

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**Figure 7** State of implementation of street guidance

(1) Changes in number of cases

(2) Number of cases in each prefecture (FY2011)

Source: Surveyed by the Cabinet Office
Approximately 240,000 young people received street guidance in FY 2011. This number is on the decline (Figure 8).

**Figure 8  Young people who received street guidance**

1. **Total number of young people who received street guidance**
   - (Thousands)
   - 0 100 200 300 400 500 600

2. **Total number of young people who received street guidance per encounter**
   - (People)
   - 0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5

3. **Total number of young people who received street guidance (in each prefecture, in FY 2011)**
   - (Thousands)

Source: Surveyed by the Cabinet Office

In FY 2011, 1,274 cases of street guidance were reported to the police (0.5% of all the young people who received street guidance), while 3,237 cases were reported to schools and families (1.3%).

### (3) Activities in detail

1. **Ichihara Youth Guidance Center**
   - This Center was established in 1972 for the purposes of promoting the healthy development of children and young people living in the city and preventing their delinquency.
   - The Center is consulted by young people with problems, their guardians and their schools (more than 500 cases a year). After being consulted, the Center interviews them or introduces relevant specialized institutions to them.
   - The Center carries out street patrols in an effort to prevent delinquency. In collaboration with the
city’s crime prevention office, the police and juvenile officers (volunteers commissioned by the city), the staff of the Center carried out patrols a total of 650 times throughout the year (in FY 2011) around the times when children go to or leave school and in the evening. They patrol the places where children may get together or dangerous places that may lead to delinquency and crimes. They also strive to find any suspicious people.

- The information gleaned on patrol is distributed to residents in the city through a mailing list called Life Reassurance Mail.
- In addition to guidance activities, they put emphasis on a friendly-greeting campaign while on patrol. When it is the time for children to go home, the staff gently urges them to go straight home, saying, “Go home now.”
- As part of their campaign to prevent delinquency, the Center collects posters and slogans from elementary school students, junior high school students and high school students in the city and holds exhibitions of their works. The staff from the Center goes to schools and gives children visiting workshops on the prevention of drug abuse, how to use a cell phone safely, morals and norm consciousness (Figure 9).
- The Center provides support for children who have come back home from a detention home to return to the community (school). It holds interviews with them for a few days and gives them advice on how to treat their family and people around them after coming back to the community (school).
- Since FY 2012, the Center has been positioned as a Comprehensive Counseling Center for Children and Young People based on the Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People. Thus the Center has come to give counseling to NEET (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) and socially withdrawn children, in addition to counseling on healthy development and delinquency, which have been provided for a long time.
- When giving counseling, the Center also acts as an intermediary by introducing specialized institutions or organizations collaborating with the Center to clients, such as the local youth support station or a mutual self-help group for withdrawn young people (Figure 10).
- Such horizontal connections are very important in dealing with various worries children have and to giving them counseling.
2) **Hiroshima City Comprehensive Youth Counseling Center**

- This Center provides counseling on bullying and truancy. Full-time counselors provide support for children with problems to reform by encouraging them to get a job or go to school.
- Full-time counselors conduct street counseling. In collaboration with the police and schools, they keep tabs on delinquents to be supported, build relationships with them, and provide guidance and advice for them so that they can be rehabilitated (Figure 11).
- Some young people manage to handle both their job and schoolwork after receiving guidance and advice for a long time, but in some cases the Center loses contact with them and cannot provide support (Figure 12).
- With the recent decrease in motorcycle gangs and proliferation of mobile phones, understanding the actual nature of delinquency is more difficult now than it was several years ago. The Center has difficulties in keeping tabs on the children in need of support and in providing support for them even if the staff comes in contact with them. The Center is striving to find those children as soon as possible in close cooperation with the local community and organizations concerned.
<Results for FY 2011>
Employment support: 28 cases
Schooling support: 12 cases

Source: Material provided by Hiroshima City Comprehensive Youth Counseling Center

3 People Taking on the Responsibility of Developing Young People

(1) Prefectural Assemblies for Youth Development, Municipal Assemblies for Youth Development

- Prefectural Assemblies for Youth Development (hereinafter referred to as “Prefectural Assemblies”) and Municipal Assemblies for Youth Development (hereinafter referred to as “Municipal Assemblies”) are organizations that are promoting a national campaign to develop young people. There is a Prefectural Assembly in every prefecture except Kanagawa Prefecture. There are 1,209 Municipal Assemblies for Youth Development across the country.
- These organizations hold inspiring events such as the “Convention for Young People’s Opinions,” and “Local Convention for Youth Development,” and conduct various campaigns such as “When adults change, children will change,” “Family Day” and the “Friendly-Greeting Campaign.” In addition, according to the actual situation of each community, the organizations perform various activities for publicity and awareness. These include honoring young people and organizations for young people as well as producing brochures and posters for the prevention of delinquency and for the healthy development of young people.

<Distinctive Initiatives (1)>

Dream Carrier Project (Hiroshima Prefectural Assembly for Youth Development)

- This project, which was started in 2004, is designed to develop young people who have a rich imagination and are independent by making elementary school children’s dreams come true together with people in the community while also gaining the cooperation of “dream carriers (famous people or experts related to their dreams).” The project aims to make activities for youth development take root in the community in cooperation with people living there.
- The project invites children in Hiroshima Prefecture to submit their dreams every year, and so far 58 dreams have come true (Figure 13).