

# Alcohol Issue Initiatives in Coastal Areas in FY 2019

Miyagi Danshukai, a Non-Profit Organization  
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## Introduction

Nine years have passed since the unprecedented disaster, and reconstruction centered on rebuilding physical assets has progressed throughout the prefecture. However, the physical, mental, and social problems caused by the disaster are as severe as ever, and with the addition of the new issue of the novel coronavirus, the situation has become even more difficult.

We of the Miyagi Danshukai are worried about the progress of alcohol-related issues in individuals that live troubled lives in disaster-affected areas and continue to be placed in uncertain situations. To develop countermeasures against this progression, we have worked alongside the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center, the government, and medical institutions to foster awareness of alcohol abuse and establish regular abstinence meetings in FY 2019.

## 1. Overview of Activities in Each Region

### (1) Regular Meetings of the Motoyoshi Danshukai in Kesenuma

<From visiting container-type temporary housing assembly halls -> temperance meetings -> regular meetings at the Danshukai meeting hall>

Our efforts to raise awareness about the harms of alcohol and create a Danshukai in the Motoyoshi area of Kesenuma which began in FY 2012, the year after the disaster, have progressed to the eighth year mainly due to the passion and discussions led by local affected persons and other affiliated parties that participated in our “Talking about Temperance” meetings. In particular, from May 2014, as the only regular meeting place in Kesenuma City, Danshukai meetings were held once a month, generally from 2:00 to 3:30 PM on the third Monday. In FY 2019, to make this effort a community-rooted gathering place, we enlisted the support of local public health nurses to continue holding these meetings. The venue, the Volunteer Room of the “Ikoi” Motoyoshi Health and Welfare Center, was also provided by the Motoyoshi General Branch in Kesenuma City. We were able to hold 11 regular meetings, however, during the three months from March to May 2020, our regular meetings were canceled due to the spread of COVID-19.

Participants are local affected persons and families who continue to participate in the regular “Talking about Temperance” meetings, multiple medical personnel in Kesenuma City, Center support staff, Kesenuma City Council Social Welfare counselors, local public health nurses, members of the Kesenuma Health Promotion Division, and Danshukai members from Sendai.

### (2) Ishinomaki Alcohol-Related Issues Training Workshop

Since February 2015, as a post-disaster alcohol-related issues countermeasure in the jurisdiction of the Kawakita General Branch of Ishinomaki City, we have worked with the government and medical institutions to hold regular Danshukai meetings at the Kawakita Health Center once a month on the second Thursday. For two years, we communicated guidelines and provided a safe space for affected persons, their families, local supporters, medical personnel, and so forth to talk about their thoughts and exchange experiences, fostering the building of many new relationships. During the discussion on the 2017 project, several points were raised, including the need for a more comfortable place for affected persons and families to gather and the need to consider regular daytime meetings. Consequently, the “Regular Night Meetings” venue held by the Ishinomaki Danshukai was changed to the Ishinomaki

City Health Counseling Center (Medical Center). The “Regular Meeting” and the “Temperance Training Workshop” modeled after Danshukai regular meetings were held with the Center's support. In FY 2019, Ishinomaki provided us with a venue, and we have held Temperance Training Workshops a total of 11 times: once a month, generally on the second Thursday from 1:30 – 3:00 PM.

However, from March to May 2020, the workshop was forced to cancel due to the novel coronavirus's spread, as described previously regarding the Motoyoshi meetings. Participants in these regular meetings are locally affected persons/family members, the Center, supporters, the Ishinomaki City Health Promotion Division, and Danshukai members from Sendai.

(3) Natori Area Danshukai

The Natori Area Danshukai began in March 2015 with all concerned parties' common desire to “establish regular Danshukai meetings in the Natori area” after the earthquake. A place that affected persons and their families could easily access, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor conference room of the Natori Public Health Center, was chosen and meetings started being held once monthly, on the second Monday, from 2:00 – 3:30 PM. We began with the idea of having participants listen to the experiences of Danshukai members, with the invitation to hear the stories of people who have stopped drinking. At the time, the government took the initiative, and the Danshukai participated as a combined entity.

In FY 2016, regular Danshukai meetings were held as “Meetings for Temperance” in Natori (once a month/at the same time on the second Monday), with the government once again serving as the primary host, as in 2015.

From FY 2017, we were able to shift to our original goal of regular Danshukai meetings, which were held once a month on the second Monday, at the same time and place, which was provided by the city of Natori. Since then, it has been held continuously, and in FY 2019, 11 meetings were held.

However, for three months, from March to May 2020, the regular meeting had to be canceled due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, as in the case of Motoyoshi Kesenuma and Ishinomaki City. Participants in the regular meeting are locally affected persons/families and Danshukai members from Sendai.

## 2. Towards the Future

We feel that the activities of the Miyagi Danshukai are still behind considering the size and state of most disaster areas. Nevertheless, as affected persons, we are convinced of our mission to “continue to talk about our experiences and recover.”

As this project approaches its final year of FY 2020, we will further strengthen cooperation with government officials and medical personnel and improve our trust relationship with supporters who are working devotedly even in difficult situations in disaster areas. I declare with conviction that these efforts will help to lighten the burdens of those who face alcohol-related issues.