

# **Chapter III**

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## **Contributions**



# 10 Years after the Disaster, and into the Future

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In 2020, while public attention was focused on the new coronavirus infection and its effects and countermeasures, we often heard the phrase, “10 years after the earthquake.” I would like to take this opportunity to review the city’s post-disaster mental health support.

Post-disaster mental health support in this city is coordinated by the Sendai City Mental Health and Welfare Center based on the "Disaster Community Mental Health and Welfare Guidelines" created in 2008 and backs up each ward’s health and welfare center (health center branch).

From March 14, three days after the disaster on March 11, 2011, with the excellent cooperation of other prefecture teams, the Japan Psychiatry and Neurology Clinic Association, universities, neighboring medical institutions, and other organizations, formed a "Care Team." We worked mainly on evacuation centers in tsunami-damaged areas. In April of the same year, a "Children's Mental Care Team" was also formed to visit nursery schools and child centers for consultation. In addition, we conducted public awareness and telephone consultations for citizens. From around May of the same year, we supported the smooth transition and transfer from evacuation shelters to temporary housing.

Support since 2012 has been implemented by formulating the "Sendai City Post-Earthquake Mental Care Action Guidelines." In this guideline, the primary goals are "I. Improve Sendai citizens' mental health" and "II. All affected people can prevent or minimize the obstacles to their daily lives caused by the stress of the earthquake. Based on changes to the victims' living environment due to the reconstruction as well as possible mental and physical health problems, the mental care plan was divided into three periods until March 2021.

Several Sendai City Mental Health and Welfare Center staff members form a multidisciplinary team for the actual support activities. The content and methods are flexibly adapted to changes in the victims' lives, the passage of time after the disaster, and regional characteristics. It is being carried out while being adapted. The support provided was collaborative visits to disaster victims' homes with the ward health and welfare center, holding earthquake stress counseling rooms, and cooperation with salon activities for people moving in from other areas such as Fukushima Prefecture, and case reviews. It covers a wide range of areas such as training. Additionally, a child psychiatrist joined the working group to support the reconstruction of life from temporary housing. The child psychiatrist expressed his opinions on the victims who had difficulty rebuilding their lives mainly due to mental reasons and played a part in the support. Moreover, the "Children's Mental Care Team" was transformed into a "Children's Mental Counseling Room" in August 2011. The cooperation of a child psychiatrist in the city and the Miyagi Prefecture, Clinical Psychiatrist Association, continues.

The problems faced by the victims are not limited to mental health problems. However, they are wide-ranging and intertwined, such as problems associated with changes in the living environment, economic and livelihood reconstruction problems, and family and household problems. Therefore, support in collaboration with multiple institutions and occupations is needed more than ever.

The city is currently creating the "Sendai City Post-Earthquake Mental Care Action Guideline (Continued Version)." This is a guideline for reviewing the support for the past 10 years, and confirming the current situation and issues on which the provision of reliable and continued support for the next five years will be

based. Most mental health support may be positioned as part of normal mental health welfare center operations. However, there is still support that needs to be implemented as "mental care." We plan to think about this over the next five years, including whether or not it is necessary.

Ten years after the earthquake, we are in a situation that would have been difficult to predict immediately after the disaster. We know what is happening to the victims, what kind of support is being sought and provided, and we are attempting to draw future support. Despite the administrative line, the Miyagi Heart Care Center, which has been working to support disaster victims in the same prefecture, still experiences support and continues to be empowered.

I would like to express my gratitude. Thank you for your hard work and continued support.