

Stem Center Community Support Division

The activities in FY 2022 of the Stem Center Community Support Division (“Division”) in the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake were in Natori City, Watari Town, and Yamamoto Town, which are under the jurisdiction of the Shiogama Public Health Center, Iwanuma Branch.

[Resident support project]

1. Individual support

(1) Continued support for high-risk health survey patients

The continued support provided by the Division for high-risk health survey patients who were affected by the disaster has been gradually handed over to the normal support responses by municipalities since FY 2019. This handover to municipalities was mainly done by conducting case study meetings, joint visits with municipal staff members, and then gradually shifting to support provided solely by municipal staff members. In FY 2022, there were no cases that were supported solely by the Division, with only two joint visits conducted for two cases of social withdrawal and suicidal ideation, which have taken time to hand over. By the end of the fiscal year, these two cases have also been handed over to municipal staff members, concluding the support provided by the Division.

2. Local resident exchange project

(1) Utsukushima Salon

We held the Utsukushima Salon, intended for those who moved from Fukushima Prefecture to the Sennan area of Miyagi Prefecture after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The forum has fostered the exchange of information about the situation within Fukushima Prefecture and where to move, as well as for interacting with friends from the same hometown. However, what used to be regularly held once a month was interrupted by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During implementation, attention was given to infection prevention, and the content was covered in about one hour. Separately from the salon, we noted cases of members who wished to have individual opportunities to interact with one another.

Table 1 shows the results of activities in FY 2022.



Color paper collage activity



Covered button magnet making

Table 1. Local resident exchange project (Utsukushima Salon)

Venue	Implementation date	Content	Participants
Iwanuma City	June 3, 2022	Seal and case making	12 people
	July 15, 2022	Aroma oil-based insect repellent spray making	6 people
	October 21, 2022	Halloween accessory making	13 people
	November 18, 2022	Color paper collage activity	12 people
	February 17, 2023	Covered button magnet making	12 people
	March 3, 2023	Memory slideshow	8 people

※ Held from 13:30–14:30, free conversation for the second half hour

[Support for supporters project]

1. Supporter consultation project (professional advice etc.)

We provided regular support once a month to Natori City and Watari Town. We also participated in case study meetings upon request, and provided support for its preparation, in Yamamoto Town, where we have been providing support as needed since FY 2022.

(1) Participation in case study meetings and case reviews

Based on post-disaster health survey cases, we shifted our focus to cases of mental difficulties faced by people raising children. In FY 2022, we participated 12 times each in Natori City and Watari Town, and once in Yamamoto Town.

2. Supporters' mental health support project (e.g., training, interviews)

We provided a lecture for supporters on mental care following a disaster upon request by Sendai Kakekomidera. We also conducted self-care training for administrative workers upon the request of the Natori City Employees Union. Approval for the Division to conduct the lecture for Sendai Kakekomidera was obtained after consulting with the Sendai City Mental Health and Welfare Center (Heart Port Sendai), and approval for the training for the Natori City Employees Union was obtained after consulting with the Shiogama Public Health Center, Iwanuma Branch.

Table 2. Mental health training for supporters

Venue	Implementation date	Content	Participants
Online	June 22, 2022	“What you should know for protecting your mental health after a disaster”	13 people
Natori City	November 17, 2022	“Self-care for administrative workers”	15 people

3. Support for supporters regarding children's mental care

The “Children's psychological first-aid training” (Children's PFA training), where basic methods of providing psychological support during disasters are shown, was conducted as follows.



One-day training: Group work



One-day training: Role play

Table 3. Children’s psychological first-aid training (Children’s PFA training)

Venue	Implementation date	Training content	Subjects/participants	Number of participants
Sendai City	May 19, 2022	Deepen teaching skills and knowledge for instructors who work as training instructors: Lecture, exercise (role play, group work)	Instructor development training participants	7 people
Online	July 28, 2022	Introductory (online) training (first session): Learn the reactions that children commonly show in crisis situations, and learn the basics of PFA for children, such as the behavioral principles of PFA and how to communicate with stressed children Lecture: “What is children’s PFA? Reactions shown by children in crisis situations”	Educational personnel (school nurses, nursery teachers, kindergarten teachers), public health nurses, child guidance center staff, etc.	43 people
Online	October 27, 2022	Introductory (online) training (second session): Same as first		23 people
Osaki City	December 11, 2022	One-day training (first session): Learn the reactions that children commonly show in crisis situations, and learn the behavioral principles of PFA and communicating with stressed children while role-playing		19 people
Iwanuma City	January 19, 2023	One-day training (second session): Same as first		27 people
Sendai City	February 2, 2023	Aimed as a refresher for assistive technique and knowledge for people who received the one-day training Lecture: “Children’s mental care for daily support” Practice: roleplay, group work	Individuals who completed the one-day training	18 people

※ The one-day training (first session) was changed from August 25 to December 11 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Longitudinal support study for children born after the Great East Japan Earthquake and their families (Michinoku Children’s Cohort Study)

In FY 2022, we continued the Michinoku Children’s Cohort Study, which has been conducted since FY 2016 with the aim of interacting with children born immediately after the earthquake, evaluating changes in children and families, clarifying effective support, and assisting in supporter activities, such as in disasters occurring in the future.

[Raising public awareness project]

1. Annual activity report creation project

The FY 2021 Annual Activity Report (Bulletin Vol. 10) was created and distributed to related institutions (1,000 copies created, distributed to 870 locations). An English version was also created and posted on the website.

2. Dissemination of mental health information

(1) Dissemination of information through websites and blogs

We disseminated information, such as an introduction to the activities of the MDMHCC, publication of back issues of our public relations magazine, posting of various pamphlets, and provision of training information, updating them as needed.

(2) Creation and distribution of leaflets, etc.

We distributed various public awareness materials related to mental health during training, health consultations, home visits, and office visits. We also provided them to municipalities upon request.

Moreover, we distributed public awareness goods at the children’s PFA training.

(3) Response to various interviews, etc.

We responded to requests for interviews and studies related to the Great East Japan Earthquake from media outlets, universities, and other organizations.

3. MDMHCC-related activity research project (see Activity Report by project item for conference presentations)

We set regulations, such as new research ethics, and established an approval committee. We held three approval committees in accordance with the new regulations, and we were able to make some progress in preparing to widely disseminate the collected knowledge.

[Other]

1. Business statistical data management

We continued to operate the business statistics system and individual support system. We analyzed activities, such as reports at national and prefectural level as well as from various conferences, and changes over time.

2. Staff training

As a general rule, all staff members participated in general meetings held twice a year to confirm the operation and direction of management, and to share information.

We also encouraged staff members to take external training as a recommended training course, to acquire skills and knowledge tailored to each staff member.

[Summary, future prospects, and challenges]

In FY 2022, we completed the integration of the Community Support Division, which has primarily been in charge of direct support to the community, and the Business Management Division, which has been in charge of various training operations, business statistics, and system management, with each project being implemented under the new system that was the new Community Support Division. FY 2022 was a year in which we worked specifically to reduce or complete our operations in the three pillars of projects (Resident support, support for supporters, and raising public awareness projects) in preparation for the completion of our Center in FY 2025. We have entered the final stage of completing our role as a disaster-response type organization with a limited operating period without encountering any problems. One aspect that has left an impression is how the phrases “how to end,” “how to close,” and “how to wrap up” could be heard multiple times during conferences and meetings in the Division. Though obvious upon reflection, it is the first time that the Division and MDMHCC have experienced this process. As such, it was also a time when we spent considerable effort feeling our way around the process, sometimes feeling confused or even lost.

From FY 2023, we begin the process of closing the MDMHCC in earnest. We would like to continue our efforts in the limited time we have, keeping in mind the common expression, “it’s an ill bird that fouls its own nest.”