

Stem Center Community Support Division Activity Report

The activities in FY 2023 of the Stem Center Community Support Division (“Division”) in the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake were in Natori City and Watari Town, which are under the jurisdiction of the Iwanuma Branch of the Shioyama Public Health Center.

【Resident support project】

1. Individual support

(1) 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 municipalities as normal support responses since FY 2019, with support at the Division concluding as of the end of FY 2022. In FY 2023, accompanied visits were conducted at the request of the municipalities.

2. Local resident exchange project

(1) Utsukushima Salon

We held the Utsukushima Salon, an activity intended for those who moved from Fukushima Prefecture to the Sennan area of Miyagi Prefecture after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The salon has continued as a monthly forum for exchanging information about the situation within Fukushima Prefecture and where to move, as well as for interacting with friends from the same hometown. In FY 2023, we paid attention to infection prevention and limited the salon on this to about one hour. However, the times were adjusted according to the content, and the events were conducted in this manner. We also announced that the salon would end as of FY 2024. Regarding the implementation content in FY 2024, which would be the salon’s final year, we would like to listen to the participants’ wishes and consider their feelings and circumstances. Table 1 shows the results of activities in FY 2023.

Table 1. Resident support project (Utsukushima salon)

Location	Date	Content	Participants
Iwanuma City	April 21, 2023	Games and breathing exercises while sitting	8 people
	May 19, 2023	Mini lecture, “Mental health”	9 people
	June 9, 2023	First picture letter class	7 people
	July 7, 2023	Second picture letter class (eraser stamp making)	9 people
	September 1, 2023	Comedy act and exchange event by comedian “Matsutomi”	13 people
	October 13, 2023	Airplants arrangement	13 people
	November 17, 2023	Aroma hand cream making	10 people
	December 15, 2023	Coffee class	13 people
	January 12, 2024	Simple humidifier using coffee filter	13 people
	February 16, 2024	Herbarium making	12 people
	March 8, 2024	Tea party	11 people

※13:30: held for 1–1.5 hours



Comedy act and exchange event by comedian “Matsutomi”



Coffee class

【Support for supporters project】

1. Supporter consultation project (advice from a professional standpoint, etc.)

We provided regular support to Natori City and Watari Town once a month.

(1) Participation in case study meetings and case reviews

Our focus shifted from post-disaster health survey cases to cases of mental difficulties faced by people raising children. In FY 2023, we participated sessions in Natori City and Watari Town once a month.

2. Support for supporters regarding children’s mental care

“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.

Table 2. Children’s psychological first-aid training (Children’s PFA training)

Venue	Implementation date	Training content	Subjects/participants	Number of participants
Sendai City	May 18, 2023	Deepen teaching skills and knowledge for instructors who work as training instructors Lecture, exercise (role play, group work)	Instructor development training participants	5 people
Osaki City	July 27, 2023	One-day training (first session): Learn the reactions that children commonly show in crisis situations, and learn aspects such as the behavioral principles of PFA and how to communicate with stressed children while role-playing Lecture: “What is children’s PFA” and “Responses of children in crisis situations”	Educational personnel (school nurses, nursery teachers, kindergarten teachers), public health nurses, child guidance center staff, etc.	22 people
Online	August 31, 2023	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”		40 people
Online	October 26, 2023	Introductory (online) training (second session): Same as the first session		19 people
Sendai City	January 18, 2024	One-day training (second session): Same as the first session		21 people
Sendai City	February 1, 2024	Aimed as a refresher course for assistive techniques and knowledge for people who received the one-day training. Lecture: “Children’s mental care in daily support” Exercise (role play, group work)	Individuals who completed the one-day training	16 people



One-day training: Lecture



One-day training: Role play

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

In FY 2023, we continued conducting the Michinoku Children's Cohort Study, which has been carried out since FY 2016 with the following aims: interacting over time with children born immediately after the earthquake, evaluating changes in children and families, clarifying effective support, and assisting in supporter activities, such as in future disasters.

【Public awareness campaign】

1. Annual activity report creation project

The FY 2022 Annual Activity Report (Bulletin Vol. 11) was created and distributed to related institutions (1,000 copies created, distributed to 850 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 on the activities of the MDMHCC, publication of back issues of our public relations magazine, viewing of various pamphlets, and provision of training information, updating such information 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, and we also provided them to local governments upon request.

We also distributed public awareness materials at the children's PFA training.

(3) Response to various interviews, etc.

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

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

In FY 2023, we continued to compile the accumulated knowledge for wider dissemination.

【Other】

1. Business statistical data management

We continued to operate the business statistics and individual support systems. We analyzed activities based on reports at the national and prefectural levels, as well as various conferences, and their 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, as well as to share information.

We also encouraged staff members to undergo external training, such as recommended training courses, with the aim of acquiring skills and knowledge tailored to each staff member.

【Summary/future prospects and challenges】

In FY 2023, we worked to reduce or end both the resident support project and the support for supporters project in preparation for the end of our activities in FY 2025, as we did during the past fiscal year. Meanwhile, the public awareness campaign project focused on compiling the knowledge accumulated through our activities thus far in a form that would be useful for mental healthcare after the next large-scale disaster rather than providing direct support work. Meanwhile, the Noto Peninsula Earthquake occurred on January 1, 2024. Many victims are still forced to live in evacuation centers. Given the scale of the damage, medium- to long-term support will be needed, and mental healthcare for victims and the supporters who support them will be an important issue. This situation reaffirmed our recognition that the handing over process we are currently working on must be utilized in such circumstances.

FY 2024 will mark the time when the results of the handing over process we have compiled thus far will be sought. As the culmination of the MDMHCC's work, we would like to continue devoting our efforts toward constantly examining how this handing over process will be useful.