

Social worker initiatives for alcohol-related problems after the earthquake

Support activities report from the Japan Social Worker Association for Alcohol-Related Problems in Ishinomaki City

Japan Social Worker Association for Alcohol-Related Problems

Disaster support projects / Sakae Fujita

Introduction

Five years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery in the disaster area has been slowly but surely advancing with the help of regional infrastructure maintenance projects. However, it has become increasingly clear that community development requires more time due to various factors. It has been five years in 2015 since initiatives for alcohol-related problems began in Ishinomaki City after the 2011 earthquake. Workshop projects in 2015 were sponsored by the Eastern health welfare office (Ishinomaki public health center) and co-hosted by the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center and the Japan Social Worker Association for Alcohol-related Problems (ASW Association), with consultations and individual support provided in coordination with the Ishinomaki City Health Promotion Division. Local assistance has given us more power to respond to difficult-to-handle problems. This text provides an FY2015 activity report which includes the content and achievements of our support, as well as future challenges.

1. Purpose of activities

The current project provides care for residents with alcohol-related problems after the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery support for stable lifestyles in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture. The project also supplies necessary knowledge and information to supporters in regions handling alcohol-related problems, provides cases and consultations for responses to residents with alcohol-related problems, and improves the skillsets of the supporting professionals.

2. Description of 2015 activities

To achieve the project objectives, the ASW Association dispatched several psychiatric social workers to Ishinomaki City twice a month (every second Friday and fourth Wednesday) from April 2015 to March 2016. These dispatched social workers provided the following support: ① cases and consultations, ② consultation interviews for clients or families, ③ accompaniment from public nurses who conduct visits to temporary housing, ④ attendance at conferences conducted in coordination with regional associates, ⑤ case study investigations, ⑥ lecturers in lectures for residents and ⑦ lecture series or workshop planning/operation for regional support professions. The Ishinomaki City Health Promotion Division managed the coordination for individual support and the collaboration system was such that the ASW Association provided the manpower. The number of dispatched members in 2015 was 8 individuals and of these members, those who handled individual support were five in total, and those who were dispatched for workshop planning or lecturing were three in total. Projects ①, ②, ③, and ④ were ended in 2015.

3. Project progress and results

Support for projects ①, ②, ③, and ④, which were individual support projects that were ongoing from FY 2014, was shown below (Figures 1 and 2). The number of supported cases was 8 (13 times in total), of which four cases were new. There was one visit case conducted, one family consultation conducted, and seven consultation or case conference cases conducted, with a total of eight consultations conducted.

Figure 1 Breakdown of support cases in 2015 (new, ongoing) 2015

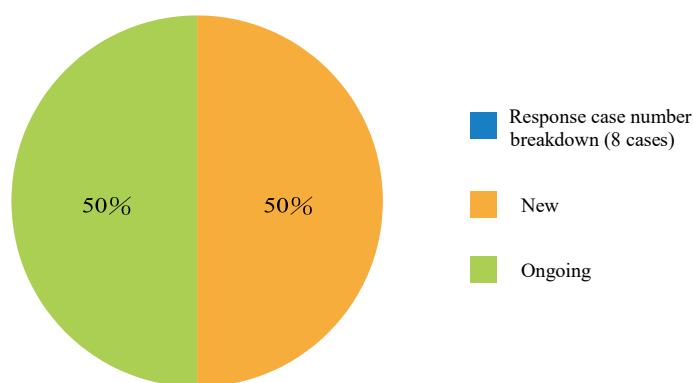


Figure 2 Breakdown of support in 2015 by type

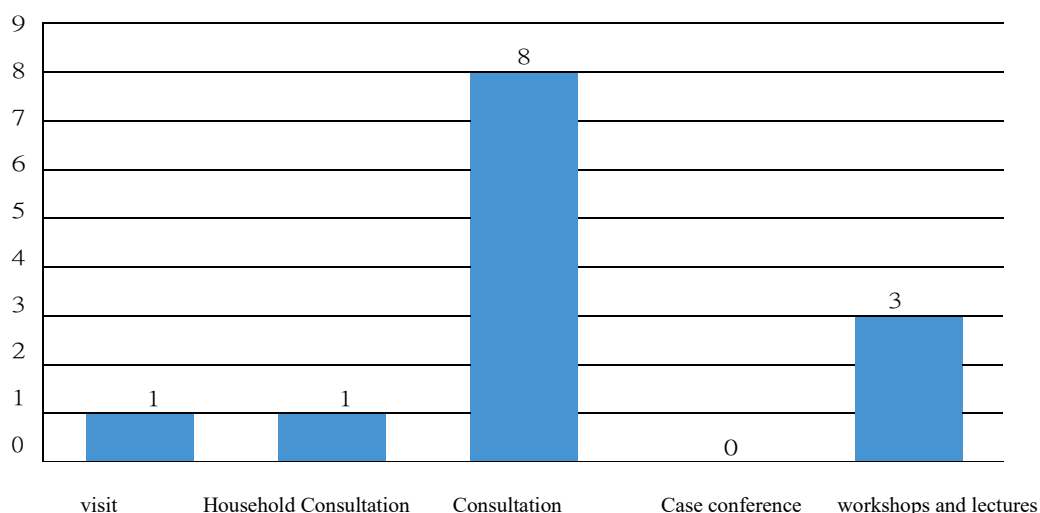


Table 1 ASW Association individual support contact people in 2015

Month of support	Dispatched members	Support content, number of cases
May	Teruyuki Sato (Tohoku Branch)	2 consultation cases
July	Kiyoyuki Koseki (Tohoku Branch)	No requests
September	Teruyuki Sato	2 consultation cases
November	Kiyoyuki Koseki	2 consultation cases
January	Sakae Fujita	1 consultation case, 1 visit, 1 consultation interview case
March	Sakae Fujita	1 consultation case

In 2015, we continued individual support, as well as hosted the following workshops for regional supporters.

① Care worker training program

Content in workshops during FY 2015 was planned to be more advanced than that presented in workshops ongoing since FY 2012. The theme was “establishing regional cooperation” and there was a demand for coordination methods when establishing coordination efforts with regional associates as a training theme. At the time, we were planning to have a total of three workshops with this theme but there were many participants in the first meeting who had no prior training with regards to alcohol-related problems, so we quickly changed the theme to “support for individuals with alcohol-related problems: assessment and support plans” and hosted the meeting. The second and third meetings were based on the theme of “thinking about regional cooperation”.

The second meeting taught about fundamental ways to think about cooperation and how to prepare for conferences and the third meeting focused on teaching how to advance partnership conferences and practiced with actual lectures and exercises. The current status is such that regional associates require even more coordination following the earthquake but since there have been few opportunities to learn about cooperation, there have been disagreements and insufficient understanding between associated organizations regarding the hosting of events. There were requests on learning how to cooperate while learning about alcohol-related problems and they requested workshops that teach specific skills. The workshops that were planned and hosted by the ASW Association upon receiving these requests are as shown below.

Table 2 FY 2015 Training program for caregivers

Lecture content	Lecturer	Hosting date	Number of participants
Support for individuals with alcohol-related problems: assessment and support plans	Sumie Okada, Sakae Fujita	July 10th, 2015	52
Thinking about regional cooperation: the basics of cooperation and its preparation	Sumie Okada, Naoto Okazaki	October 19th, 2015	37
Thinking about regional cooperation: how to advance partnership conferences	Sumie Okada, Sakae Fujita, Naoto Okazaki	December 16th, 2015	31

4. FY 2015 achievements and future challenges

Considering the achievements of support which has been ongoing since 2011, we had planned in 2015 to transition from basic content to applications with regards to training, but many of the actual participants had not attended ASW Association workshops and although participants were struggling with alcohol-related problems, we determined that many were at a stage before grasping these challenges and so we changed the content of the first workshop to a more basic one. The second and third workshops were entitled “thinking about regional cooperation” and its content was more focused on learning the basic understanding and knowledge of the theme of “cooperation”. Participants had mentioned that “it was useful because they could apply it to problems other than those related to alcohol”. The reasoning for why “cooperation” was chosen as the theme was because, during discussions with regional associates, they had mentioned that “after the earthquake, many support professions have had to handle the problems of each region and although they had become more aware of the importance of cooperation, they were struggling in their workplaces because they did not have the opportunity to learn how to put this into practice” and they had indicated this cooperation as a need to be obtained through training. This year was characterized by providing support for latent “connections” in the region through training and case study investigations.

Additionally, individual support activities, which ended with FY 2015, consisted of veteran staff members affiliated with the Tohoku branch of the ASW Association providing support without any collaborations and providing direct stakeholder and family consultations with public health nurses and regional associates. These efforts contributed to the response capabilities of regional supporters and the support itself provided by these staff members was completed. By hosting these workshops in FY 2015, we once again realized how regional needs have evolved with recovery progress. We also realized that supporters have silently struggled without understanding or knowing the methods for supporting alcohol-related problems over these past five years. For 2016, we are planning more fundamental workshops that focus on handling alcohol-related problems so that more supporters can apply this training in their work.