Request for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse under the Condition of Novel Coronavirus Countermeasures

All Japan Women's Shelter Network
Representative, KITANAKA Chisato
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To Prime Minister, Mr. ABE Shizo,
To Minister of gender equality, Ms. HASHIMOTO Seiko,
To Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Mr. KATO Atsunobu,

Due to the worsening economic conditions associated with the recent countermeasures against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the need to stay at home, there is a concern that child abuse and domestic violence (DV) in the home will worsen and the number of cases will increase. In the field of consultation, such consultations are already coming in little by little, and from our experience (such as at the time of the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake), it is expected to get worse in the future.

Therefore, we urgently request the following

1. Please do not close the domestic violence or child abuse consultation service even in an emergency situation. In the case of the introduction of SNS consultation, it should be conducted by staff with direct support experience and private shelters. Also, please let people know that the consultation service is open, and share information on the system to help people who come for evacuation so that they can get temporary protection immediately, no matter where they are consulted, to prevent life-threatening situations.

2. During the period of the anti-corona measures, the prefectural government should be able to automatically start temporary protection when a victim flees to a city office or private shelter, as is currently done in Hokkaido. And when a private organization receives a request for temporary protection directly from a municipality(city government), the national or prefectural government should bear the costs, regardless of whether the organization is a temporary protection contractor or not. In addition, many prefectures set the temporary protection period at two weeks, but please extend
the period flexibly in consideration of the situation of coronavirus countermeasures.

3. There will be an increase in the number of single-parent households in economic deprivation. If temporary benefits are introduced as a remedy for low-income people, there is a risk that spouses and children who leave home because of domestic violence without transferring their residency cards will not be able to receive such benefits. Essentially, it should be bailed out on an individual basis. However, even if the benefit is provided on a household basis, special measures should be taken to provide the aid money, etc., even if the head of the household is not the head of the household of the residence card if at least one of the following conditions is met. (Also, please be flexible about providing benefits to those without bank accounts.)

Those who have proof of DV consultation
A victim of a case in which a protection order under the anti-domestic violence law has been issued
Those who have taken support measures such as restriction of access to the resident card.
Other organizations such as child welfare centers, police, spousal violence counseling and support centers, local government counseling centers for gender equality, and private organizations are receiving counseling, and those organizations are not the location of the resident card and the person who proves to be a victim of domestic violence who lives in a place where the resident card is not located (in accordance with the current procedure for requesting support measures to restrict access to the basic resident card)

4. In order to support their livelihoods, we think it would be a more stable relief to apply public assistance to those whose income status is below the public assistance standard and provide them with a lower amount, rather than just cash benefits. Please expand the coverage of public assistance. In addition, please provide a flexible, rather than clerical, approach to income recognition for households that maintain their livelihoods on public assistance and employment income.

5. If a user or staff member of the shelter is infected, there is a risk that the location of the shelter will be known if it is reported in detail in the media. Please take into consideration the contents of the DV shelter staff and the reports.
[It's already happening]

- There are many consultation centers in local governments that cancel person-to-person counseling making it difficult to provide consultation and support even when domestic violence is worsening.

- There has been a considerable increase in consultations at the child welfare centers, and with the husband at home, the high-pressure control on both the wife and the child has become so severe that there have been many phone calls.

Voices:
- “I would like to discuss this with you not only by phone but also in person-to-person counseling, but I am so concerned about the impact of the novel Corona that I am too afraid to take the train and come to the counseling. Please introduce consultation on SNS.”

- “My husband became a home-based worker and my children were out of school, so my husband became stressed and began to physically assault children and me.”

- “My husband is now at home by telecommuting, and he used to work long hours. He started pushing me to do all the household chores, complaining about everything, and then there's moral harassment.”

- “I had been preparing to leave home a with my child due to domestic violence for a long time, but now that my self-employed husband is out of work and has to stay at home all the time to monitor the family, it has become difficult to evacuate and I am in despair.”

- “A wife left the children and evacuated due to domestic violence, but when school was closed and the children began to spend time with their father, the children ran away from him because he shouted at them loudly and kept them out of the house at night when the children cried. Some children (girls) were placed in the care of the child center, but there is not enough room and boys are not placed in the care of the child center.”

- A victim of domestic violence from her self-employed husband has lost contact
with her because her husband and child are at home and it seems difficult to talk to her over the phone.

- DV husband and the wife are living apart at home. Because their child with a developmental disability, they can't get a divorce. School is out, after-school childcare program and the children's cafeteria are closed, as a result, the child has to stay at home. There has been an increase in violence against the child by the father, and the mother is also committing violence against the child.

- If her husband is a public servant or a police officer, the victim evacuated without transferring their residency cards and did not receive any support measures. “I can't apply for financial support directly under my own name, I'm afraid to do it.” In some cases, they may not have a bank account, and they will not receive it by direct deposit.

- Even if there is a direct guarantee from now on, if you are a victim of foreign domestic violence on a spousal visa and live apart without a divorce, you may not be able to get a spousal visa.

- In some cases, the foreign national victim is connected only to the private organization, and they are worried about whether they will receive the benefits.

- The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has information on the novel Corona for foreign nationals, but they have not been able to get there. They can get information from their own national network, but if they are fleeing due to domestic violence, they may not be able to get it. They want to get information that is easy to understand and in a safe way. Some have expressed concern about whether people who have entered Japan on working visas or as technical interns will also receive financial support.

[Concerns]

- There will be an increase in the number of phone calls from continuing counselors due to restrictions on person-to-person counseling.

- As spouses and children are at home, the victim is deprived of the opportunity to make consultation calls.
- As people refrain from going outdoors, violence becomes more serious and restrictions on behavior, such as monitoring perpetrators, become stronger.

- It is difficult to connect to the "Yorisoi hotline" even now. Lines need to be increased to allow for emergency consultation response.

- As many part-time employees waiting at home or being unemployed increases, violence, abuse in families in economic deprivation is expected to increase.

- An increasing number of victims of violence withhold hospital visits and treatment due to corona anxiety.

- Some government offices and gender equality centers are closed, making it impossible to provide the necessary consultation services even in emergencies.

- The number of emergency temporary evacuation cases without prior consultation and preparation will increase.

- Discrimination against foreign immigrant women and their families is intensified.

- Single mothers who work in the restaurant or entertainment industry are immediately deprived of their livelihood.