

# Role and Function of the Councils of Social Welfare

## 1. What are the Councils of Social Welfare?

The Councils of Social Welfare is private organizations that promote community welfare, giving high priority to public interests.

What does “community welfare” mean in this context?

Not only welfare and health services but also connections with neighbors and friends are essential for elderly persons, disabled persons, and other people in need of support to continue to live in the communities where they have lived so long. It is hard for them to continue to live in the communities without community people’s intention to support them as members of their communities and their actual support. It can be said that community welfare is a system whereby specialists and community people can jointly support people in need of support.

In addition, the Social Welfare Act provides that a municipality may have only one Council of Social Welfare and that a Council of Social Welfare shall consists of (1) persons engaged in social welfare and (2) residents and volunteers. As an organization whereby persons engaged in social welfare and residents jointly carry out activities, each Council of Social Welfare represents the community and gives high priority to public interests.

## 2. Network of the Councils of Social Welfare

Japan National Council of Social Welfare	1
— Prefectural Councils of Social Welfare	47
— Municipal Councils of Social Welfare	1,782
— Cabinet-Order Designated City Councils of Social Welfare	18
— Ward Councils of Social Welfare	130

## 3. Legal grounds for the Councils of Social Welfare

### Social Welfare Act

#### Section 2. Councils of Social Welfare

##### Article 109 (Municipal Councils of Social Welfare and Ward Councils of Social Welfare)

- (1) The purpose of a Municipal Council of Social Welfare shall be to promote community welfare by performing the services listed below in an area consisting of a municipality or two or more municipalities in a prefecture. A Municipal Council of Social Welfare shall include persons that manage services for the purpose of social welfare or carry out activities related to social welfare in the area. In the case of a cabinet-order designated city, the Municipal Council of Social Welfare shall include more than a half of the Ward

Councils of Social Welfare in the city and more than a half of the persons who manage social welfare services or rehabilitation services in the city. In the case of a municipality other than a cabinet-order designated city, the Municipal Council of Social Welfare shall include more than a half of the persons who manage social welfare services or rehabilitation services in the municipality.

- (i) Planning and implementation of services for the purpose of social welfare
  - (ii) Support for residents' participation in activities related to social welfare
  - (iii) Survey, popularization, advertising, communication, coordination, and aid related to services for the purpose of social welfare
  - (iv) Besides the services listed above, services necessary for sound development of services for the purpose of social welfare
- (2) The purpose of a Ward Council of Social Welfare shall be to promote community welfare by performing the services listed in the preceding paragraph in an area consisting of a ward or two or more wards (as defined in Article 252-20 of the Local Autonomy Act). A Ward Council of Social Welfare shall include persons who manage services for the purpose of social welfare or carry out activities related to social welfare in the area. In addition, a Ward Council of Social Welfare shall include more than a half of the persons who manage social welfare services or rehabilitation services in the area.
  - (3) Of the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare, those in the cabinet-order designated cities shall not only perform the services listed in Paragraph (1) but also maintain mutual liaison and coordinate services among the Ward Councils of Social Welfare in the area.
  - (4) Any Municipal or Ward Councils of Social Welfare may perform any of the services listed in Paragraph (1) beyond its area, if this is expected to make the performance of the services more effective.
  - (5) Any staff member of a related administrative agency may become a board member of the Municipal or Ward Council of Social Welfare; provided, however, that staff members of related administrative agencies may not exceed a fifth of the total number of members of the Council.
  - (6) When a person who manages services for the purpose of social welfare or carries out activities related to social welfare applies for participation in a Municipal or Ward Council of Social Welfare, the Council may not decline the application without due reason.

**Article 110 (Prefectural Council of Social Welfare)**

- (1) The purpose of a Prefectural Council of Social Welfare shall be to promote community welfare by performing the services listed below in the prefecture. A Prefectural Council of Social Welfare shall include more than a half of the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare in the prefecture and more than a half of persons who manage social welfare services or rehabilitation services in the prefecture.
  - (i) Services that are listed in Paragraph (1) of the preceding article and can be performed more appropriately if being performed beyond municipal borders

- (ii) Provision of training to persons engaged in services for the purpose of social welfare
  - (iii) Provision of guidance and advice about management of services for the purpose of social welfare
  - (iv) Maintenance of mutual liaison and coordination of services among the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare
- (2) The provisions of Paragraphs (5) and (6) of the preceding article shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Prefectural Councils of Social Welfare.

**Article 111** (Federation of Councils of Social Welfare)

- (1) The Prefectural Councils of Social Welfare may establish a national federation of Councils of Social Welfare to maintain mutual liaison and coordinate services.
- (2) The provision of Paragraph (5) of Article 109 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the federation of Councils of Social Welfare.

**4. Standard services provided by the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare**

The Social Welfare Act only shows an outline of the Councils of Social Welfare. There are only a limited number of “services to be performed.” Therefore, each Council of Social Welfare has been providing various services according to the local characteristics and circumstances.

However, there is a basic framework, in which services have been roughly classified into the following four sections:

- (1) **Community welfare activities promotion section:** This section researches and analyzes various welfare issues arising in the community, promotes systematic and planned efforts to solve the issues in cooperation with the residents, volunteers, and various organizations and agencies and, if necessary, create community welfare services.
- (2) **Welfare service use support section:** To support elderly and disabled persons, this section promotes the support for the use of welfare services and the support for life through general counseling, lending of funds, procedural agency, provision of information, etc.
- (3) **Home welfare service section:** This section carries out services under the long-term care insurance system and the assistance benefit supply system and manages home welfare services commissioned by the municipality under laws and contracts.

In addition to them, **the corporate management section** was newly established to administer the corporation properly, to manage the services efficiently and to plan and coordinate affairs concerning the overall organization, such as financial and personnel affairs. Below, I would like to explain the services of each Council of Social Welfare in line with the above-described classification into the three sections.

**Services provided by the community welfare activities promotion section**

The section elicits interest in welfare (activities) from the community people, encourages them to participate in welfare activities, coordinates needs with activities, adjusts and coordinates activities, and supports the creation of activities. The section is characterized by provision of support to both territorially-bonded organizations (autonomous neighborhood associations and residents' associations for promotion of community welfare) and volunteer and civil activities carried out in a little wider area, such as at the municipal level.

The following are examples of services provided by the section

Watching and support network: Three to four volunteers (mainly neighbors) watch, visit, and support an elderly or disabled person. If there are problems that cannot be solved only by the volunteers, they are sent to specialized organizations. The network also connects elderly and disabled persons tending to be isolated with the community without fail. The operation of the network requires acquisition of approval from each elderly or disabled person. In many cases, those who do not give approval have serious problems. In such cases, it is important to watch them gently. This network system has been adopted by 46.4% of the Councils of Social Welfare in Japan.

Friendly and lively salons: These are places where users and volunteers can spend happy time together. Unlike day service centers, salons have a more relaxed atmosphere and users can freely visit them at any time. Many Councils of Social Welfare hold a salon once a month or once a week. Some Councils of Social Welfare hold it every day. There are various salons: those for the elderly, the intellectual disabled, the mentally disabled, and childrearing families. Salons for childrearing families are sometimes called "childrearing salons." This salon system has been adopted by 71.8% of the Councils of Social Welfare in Japan. There are about 40,000 salons in Japan.

Meal service: Volunteers provide meals through delivery or gathering. Meals are prepared by volunteers or professionals. Provision of high-quality meals enables elderly and disabled persons to have sufficient nutrition. In addition, volunteers can talk with them and check their health conditions. It is important for volunteers to make them eat as pleasantly as possible (many elderly persons do not eat properly). This service has been provided by 68.7% of the Councils of Social Welfare in Japan. The total number of meals is 1.4 million.

Counseling office (by residents): In areas where activities are briskly carried out based on the above-described services, residents themselves manage counseling offices. Volunteers flexibly satisfy the needs that cannot be satisfied by government programs (whenever necessary, counseling offices seek advice from the Councils of Social Welfare or specialists).

### **Welfare service use support section**

There are persons who cannot even use welfare services due to dementia, intellectual disabilities, mental disabilities, etc. This section supports them. Concretely, the section provides the following services:

The daily life independence support service gives assistance to persons insufficiently competent due to dementia, intellectual disorder, or mental disorder in the management of money and the use of welfare services, and provides various types of consultation and support concerning them. The main 651 Councils of Social Welfare provide this service in all the municipalities in Japan.

Living & welfare fund loan service lends funds and provides necessary assistance and guidance to low-income persons, elderly persons, disabled persons, etc. This service has been provided by almost all Councils of Social Welfare.

The general counseling office provides non-institutionalized services and support in cooperation with volunteers in order to solve the issues that cannot be solved by the institutionalized services.

### Home welfare service section

The Councils of Social Welfare also serve as offices of home welfare services, such as long-term care insurance services and welfare services for the disabled. The ratio of the Councils of Social Welfare that provide each service is as follows:

Ratio of the Councils of Social Welfare that provide long-term care insurance services (as of October 2006)

Visiting care service	78.1%
Visiting bathing care service	32.0%
Day-care center service	54.9%
Home care support service	75.6%

## 5. Financial conditions of the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare

Unit: thousands yen

	Councils providing long-term care insurance services		Councils not providing long-term care insurance services	
Membership fees	5,649	2.1%	8,672	5.4%
Donations	5,609	2.1%	5,163	3.2%
Shares	314	0.1%	598	0.4%
Operating expense subsidies	45,675	16.7%	56,625	35.5%
Grants-in-aid	2,443	0.9%	3,800	2.4%
Commissions	63,749	23.3%	54,098	33.9%
Service revenues	7,573	2.8%	9,910	6.2%
Community chest allocation	6,750	2.5%	10,535	6.6%
Charges	1,357	0.5%	1,203	0.8%
Long-term care insurance	110,176	40.3%	0	0.0%
Usage fees (support expenses)	9,073	3.3%	2,147	1.3%
Expenses for welfare placement	542	0.2%	5	0.0%
Operating expenses	1,920	0.7%	117	0.1%
Sundry income	1,817	0.7%	948	0.6%
Others	11,075	4.0%	5,544	3.5%
Total revenues	273,530	100.0%	159,361	100.0%

## 6. Structure of a Municipal Council of Social Welfare

- (1) Residents' associations
  - a. Resident members, Ward Councils of Social Welfare, residents' autonomous associations, etc.
  - b. Associations of parties concerned, etc.
- (2) Associations that carry out activities related to social welfare \*1
  - a. Volunteer groups
  - b. Civil activity groups, such as NPOs \*2
  - c. Other associations that carry out activities related to social welfare \*3
- (3) Public and private social welfare service providers, associations related to social welfare, etc.
  - a. Commissioned welfare/child welfare volunteers, or their associations
  - b. Social welfare facilities and associations
  - c. Rehabilitation service facilities and associations
  - d. Welfare (nursing care and childcare) service providers \*4
  - e. Social welfare administrative agencies
  - f. Organizations and associations related to health, medical care, education, etc. \*5
- (4) Main local associations necessary for promotion of community welfare \*5
  - a. Associations in life-related domains, such as community development, housing, environment, labor, and economy
  - b. Other associations necessary for promotion of community welfare, such as associations related to law, finance, etc.

## 7. History of Councils of Social Welfare

1951	Formation of the Central Social Welfare Council Formation of the Prefectural Councils of Social Welfare (in all prefectures)		Enforcement of Social Welfare Services Law
1959	Inauguration of the Central Council for Development of District Organizations in Health and Welfare	Concept of "residents-centered principle"	
	Publication of "For the Training of Social Welfare Volunteers and the Promotion of Social Welfare Activities"		
1962	Establishment of "Basic Guidelines for the Administration of Social Welfare Councils"		
	Inauguration of Zeni (goodwill) banks in Tokushima and Oita Prefectures	Intermediary for popularization of volunteer activities	
1963			Beginning of government subsidy for welfare activities instructors
1966			Beginning of government subsidy for welfare activities specialists
1967			Administrative Management

			Agency "Advice Concerning Community Chest"
1968	"Survey on the Actual Situation of Bed-Ridden Elderly Persons at Home" (commissioned welfare/child welfare volunteers)		
1971	Denial of commissioned services Denial of direct provision of services (limited to the function to promote residents' community welfare activities)	Increase in subsidies and commissions from municipalities Change into "subcontracting bodies"	Central Council of Social Welfare's report "Community Formation and Social Welfare" Era of expansion of public welfare
1973			Beginning of government subsidy for "expenses for operation of volunteer activities guidance centers in prefectures and cabinet-order designated cities"
1975			Beginning of government subsidy for "expenses for operation of volunteer activities guidance centers in municipalities"
1976	First National Conference for the Study of Community Welfare	Centering on low-income persons, centering on facilities ⇒ Community welfare	
1977	Establishment of National Volunteer Activities Promotion Center (beginning of government subsidy)		
1979	Publication of "Strategy for Home Welfare Services"	Some opined that community welfare and home welfare services were more economical. Increase in provision of home welfare services (Positive group and passive group changing into subcontracting bodies)	
1983	Legislation for the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare (which came into force on Oct. 1)		
1985			Beginning of state-subsidized Voluntopia project (welfare volunteers' community development project)
1987	Publication of "Prospects and Issues of Residents-Participating Home Welfare Service"		
1989		Progress in establishment of home welfare services mainly for the elderly	Establishment of "Ten-Year Strategy to Promote Health Care and Welfare for the Elderly" (Gold Plan)
1990	Addition of the provision that "Efforts shall be made to plan and implement projects for the purpose of social welfare"		Amendments to eight welfare-related laws
1991		Creation of the method whereby Councils of Social Welfare establish the method and system to solve problems through dealing with each welfare problem * Connection of home welfare services with community welfare activities, such as sub-community networks and friendly and lively salons.	Beginning of state-subsidized "Friendly Community Development Project"

1992	Establishment of “New Basic Guidelines for the Administration of Social Welfare Councils”		
1994	Proposal of “service-type council of social welfare” Proposal of friendly and lively salons		
1995		Reconfirmation of significance of volunteer activities ⇒ New expanse of activities	Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake
1998		Forced to cooperate with NPO Diversification of driving force behind volunteer activities	“Nonprofit Organization Law” (NPO Law)
1999			Beginning of state-subsidized “Daily Life Independence Support Project”
2000			Basic structural reform of social welfare ⇒ Establishment of Social Welfare Act
		Sharp decrease in “commissions” due to long-term care insurance system Some were hard-pressed to manage long-term care insurance.	Start of long-term care insurance system
2002	Establishment of “Guidelines for the Municipal Councils of Social Welfare” Establishment of “Guidelines for Formulating a Plan for Community Welfare Activities”	Move to reduce subsidies to Councils of Social Welfare	Financial crisis of municipalities
2003	Activation of community welfare-oriented services (community welfare-type welfare services)		Enforcement of the “community welfare plan” provision
2004	Proposal of “community welfare-type welfare services” Proposal of creation of “general community system for counseling and life support”		