

Section 3. Promotion of Various Improvements in Day Care Services and Comprehensive Measures for After-School Children

1. Measures for Wait Listed Children

Day-care centers are facilities which provide day care for infants who are not able to receive day care at home due to various reasons including their parents' work commitments. They provide day care services responding to diverse work styles while making efforts to ensure healthy physical and mental development.

In order to eliminate the "children on waiting list" at day-care centers, mainly in urban areas where many of them exist, the "zero wait listed children" has been promoted since FY 2002. In addition, measures are being promoted to increase the number of accepted children at day-care centers to 2.15 million by FY 2009 in accordance with the "Child and Childrearing Support Plan". As a result of these efforts, the number of children on waiting lists decreased for 4 consecutive years to 18,000 as of April 2007.

Furthermore, the "new zero wait listed children" was compiled to improve and expand measures for day care and after school in terms of both quality and quantity with the goal of "securing a day care services foundation so that all the people who are eager to work can do so leaving their children with these services, while making the number of children on waiting list zero" and expanding the measures to include those of after school. Measures will be promoted for the 3 years from FY2008 to FY2010 in particular as a period of emphasis.

2. Day Care Services According to Diverse Needs

In order to cope with diverse day care needs, services such as extended-hour care, night time care, and holiday care, and temporary/specific care are being promoted.

In addition, the "Draft Law to Amend the Child Welfare Law" described in section 1 establishes legal status of family-type day care services and temporary day care services for all children while maintaining a certain level of quality, and hence promotion of day care services and expanding support for all childrearing families will be implemented.

3. Certified Children's Garden System

A certified children's garden system has been enforced since October 2006 and is a system in which prefectures certify kindergartens and day-care centers that function in providing integrated education and day care for preschool children and community-based childrearing support. As of April 1, 2008, 229 facilities were being certified nationwide. Efforts are being made to promote the certified children's garden system in cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to facilitate its

utilization.

4. Promotion of Comprehensive Measures for After-School Children (“After-School Children Plan”)

Healthy development programs for after-school children (after-school children club) have been implemented with the aim of healthy development of children aged roughly 10 or less of absentee homes such as double income families through providing places for playing and living utilizing spare classrooms after school. As of May 1, 2007, after-school children clubs were being utilized in 16,685 locations with the number of registered children being 749,478. In addition, an “After-School Children Plan” to be implemented in cooperation or in unison with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology was formulated in FY 2007. Efforts are being made to promote the plan so that it will be implemented, in principle, in every elementary school district.