Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
Service Guide
2019

For people, for life, for the future
Message from the Vice-Minister

As expressed by the phrase “from the cradle to the grave”, the Health, Labour and Welfare administration is the administration that is most familiar to people, and closely supports the whole life of each individual.

The major sectors include medical care, long-term care, childcare support, pension, labour, and welfare, etc., indicating how closely the administration is related to people’s lives and how diverse the sectors that the Ministry is addressing. The Ministry is working day by day to ensure safety in “life” and “work” of all the people, and build a “society in which all people can play active roles” that makes everyone’s life safe and worth living, including the youth, elderly people, men and women, and persons with disabilities and intractable diseases, etc.

Maintaining the universal health insurance and pension systems, which Japan is so rightfully proud of, leading the “world” as an advanced health country, and creating a community in which everyone can live a satisfying life with purpose -- the health, labour, and welfare administration is broad ranging, highly responsible, and dynamic. The daily work of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare is also challenged with the task of changing society for the better.

At present, Japan is facing extraordinary issues in history, namely declining birthrate, aging population, and rapid decrease in population. Under such circumstances, the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare have been significant, with a budget accounting for approximately 34 trillion yen that is more than half the national general expenditure. Approximately 32,000 officials of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will work together to gain people’s trust, so that not only people who live now, but also the future generations of their children and grandchildren can feel that they are “happy to have been born in Japan”.

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Work that supports people’s entire lives
Every life stage together with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

The mission of the Ministry is to build a society that ensures lifelong security of each and every person -- from birth through post-retirement. It will also support the basis of economic growth of Japan. In order to look after people into the future, the Ministry is working to promote various measures.

Medical care

- Aiming at medical care for all people
- Open the way to the future of the health insurance system

Health promotion/disease control

- Supporting and protecting health of all the people

Pharmaceutical and food safety

- Ensuring pharmaceutical and food safety

Improvement of employment environment

- Creating a diverse employment environment in which everyone can play an active role

Ensuring working conditions

- Protecting working conditions, safety, and security of workplaces

Employment policies

- Realizing "work" in ways one likes

Support for children and childcare

- Supporting child-rearing generations to protect children’s smiling faces

Vocational skills development

- Realizing the development of “human resource development”

Support for persons with disabilities/social welfare and relief assistance

- Realizing a regionally cohesive society

Long-term care insurance

- Supporting a society in which people can live in ways they like in their local communities

Pension

- Realizing “intergenerational support” that will continue for the next 100 years
Aiming at medical care for all people

Our Mission

Policy

Establishment of a medical care system for the future

With an aging population and progress in the development of medical technologies, medical care needs have become more diversified and complicated, including not only treatment-oriented medical care but also the improvement of quality of life in which patients coexist with sickness by treatment of chronic phase diseases and home medical care, etc. In order to address this situation, efforts are being made in formulating the future ideal medical care system in communities as community health care visions, including the future demand for each hospital bed function, etc. to promote division/coordination of hospital bed functions and enhancement of home medical care, etc. Through these efforts, the Bureau is working to establish a medical care system capable of responding to the future of Japan.

Promotion of innovations etc. in the pharmaceutical and medical device industries, etc.

Japan is one of the few countries developing new drugs and has cutting-edge manufacturing technologies. Therefore, the pharmaceutical and medical device industry is expected to be an industry that bears economic growth. In recent years, the roles of venture companies that turn advanced science and technology into the development of innovative drugs, etc. are becoming important. Under such circumstances, “Japan Healthcare Venture Summit 2018” was held to promote the development and practical application of innovative drugs, etc. and regenerative medical products while advancing the efforts to expand people’s understanding of medical ventures, etc.

Responding to disaster medical care

In Japan, natural disasters frequently occur, including, most recently, heavy rain in July 2018, earthquake centered in Northern Osaka Prefecture, and 2018 Hokkaido Eastern Iburi earthquake, etc. In order to protect people’s lives, safety, and health in a time of disaster, the Bureau provides training for the Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) and, at the time of disaster, sends the Team to the disaster areas and ensures distribution of drugs, etc.

Support for research and development on drugs/medical devices, etc.

The development of drugs/medical devices requires significant time and money, and therefore support for research has been provided through the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development, etc. Support is also provided to research and development of the most advanced technologies such as regenerative medicine and genomic medicine, etc.

Hot Topics

Work-style reform for doctors

At present hospital doctors are forced to work long hours. In order to maintain a society in which necessary medical care is provided in the future, however, an environment in which doctors can continue to work healthily needs to be developed. For this reason, the Bureau is promoting “work-style reform for doctors” to protect doctors’ health while securing regional medical care and the quality of medical care through hospital management reform and promotion of team medical care in which doctors’ work is shared with other professionals. At the same time, the Bureau is disseminating efforts to consider better ways to receive medical care from the standpoint of patients/people who are the recipients of medical services.

Dissemination/enlightenment of “Jinsei-kaigi” (End-of-Life Discussion)

At the End-of-Life (EOL) stage, approximately 70% of people are said to become unable to make decisions or convey their wishes regarding medical care, etc. In order to enable people to live out their lives the way they wish, efforts to repeatedly discuss medical care, etc. to be received at the EOL stage with family members, etc. and medical care teams in advance are important, regardless of age. For the dissemination of such efforts, a nickname “Jinsei-kaigi” (EOL Discussion) is set and November 30 is set to be the “Jinsei-kaigi” day to continue promoting “Jinsei-kaigi” (EOL Discussion).
Supporting and protecting health of all the people

Our Mission

The Health Service Bureau has been making the utmost efforts in implementing health promotion, cancer control measures, and public health measures toward realizing a society in which people’s healthy life expectancies are extended and each citizen can live a high quality healthy life and utilize his/her abilities to play active roles. Efforts are also made in overcoming intractable/rare diseases, providing support for patients to live with such diseases in their communities, and enhancing preparedness against intractable diseases occurring domestically or abroad by assuming various situations.

Policy

01 Toward a society without unwanted second-hand tobacco smoke exposure

Being exposed to smoke generated from tobacco smoked by someone else is referred to as “second-hand tobacco smoke exposure”. Second-hand tobacco smoke exposure increases the risk of lung cancer, etc. Taking the Tokyo Olympic/Paralympic Games in 2020 as an opportunity, the Health Promotion Act was revised to prevent unwanted second-hand tobacco smoke exposure. The Bureau promotes measures that lead to health promotion of the people.

02 Understanding cancer and aiming to overcome cancer

Cancer has been the leading cause of death in Japan since 1981, and 50% of people are estimated to suffer from cancer once in their life. Cancer remains an important issue for people’s lives and health.

Based on the Basic Plan to Promote Cancer Control Programs formulated with the aim of promoting cancer control measures in an integrated and planned manner, the Bureau promotes measures by setting “cancer prevention”, “improvement of cancer treatment”, and “coexistence with cancer” as the main pillars.

The Bureau will continue to make utmost efforts to overcome cancer.

03 Preventing the occurrence/spread of infectious diseases to support the safety and security of the people

Due to the accelerated international travel of people and goods across the national borders, the risk of infectious diseases such as avian influenza and Ebola hemorrhagic fever, etc. is increasing. The Bureau has been working to prevent entry of infectious diseases by reinforcing functions of quarantine stations and to strengthen proper responses by administrative/medical institutions to domestic occurrences. These efforts will be further strengthened for the Tokyo Olympic/Paralympic Games.

The Bureau strives to promote correct knowledge about infectious diseases and preventive measures such as vaccinations, etc. among people in peace time to ensure safety and security. In particular, in response to the increase in the number of rubella patients since around July 2018, the Bureau has compiled, and has been promoting, a new measure to conduct antibody tests and vaccination in combination for males who did not have opportunities to receive regular vaccination under the Preventive Vaccinations Act.

Furthermore, antimicrobial resistant organisms have been a global issue in recent years, and the Bureau has been leading other Asian countries in taking antimicrobial resistance (AMR) measures.

Promotion of health

The Bureau promotes lifestyle disease prevention, etc. with the aim of creating a society in which people’s healthy life expectancies are extended and everyone can play an active role longer and healthily. Health promotion efforts are also made with the involvement of enterprises and communities by developing an environment for healthful food and appropriate exercise, etc.

Cancer control measures

The Bureau has been promoting efforts to overcome cancer so that people can prevent avoidable cancer by having appropriate knowledge about cancer and so that patients can receive reliable and reasonable cancer treatment and support anywhere, anytime according to various symptoms of cancer, and continue to live with respect.

Infectious disease measures

In order to protect people from infectious diseases that threaten mankind across national boundaries, the Bureau is working to strengthen quarantine systems, thoroughly provide vaccinations, promote research and development of therapeutic drugs, and ensure appropriate use of antibiotics, etc.

Intractable/rare disease measures

The Bureau is working on subsidizing medical treatment expenses, promoting early diagnosis and developing suitable medical environments, and promoting research for the development of therapies to enable people with rare diseases for which effective treatments have yet to have been established to live with a sense of security in their communities while continuing long-term recuperation.

Hot Topics

Cancer immunotherapy

In 2018, Honjo Tasuku was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Research on cancer immunotherapy has brought great hope for people suffering with cancer. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will continue to actively support cancer research that lead to the promotion of cancer control measures.

Night Yoga

In September 2018, “Night Yoga” was held in Meiji Jingu Stadium as an event of the “Health Promotion Month”. Approximately 1,000 people enjoyed yoga exercise on the ground of Meiji Jingu Stadium that is normally not open to the public. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, in cooperation with the Japan Sports Agency, will continue to promote the creation of opportunities for both men and women to start engaging in exercises.
Ensuring pharmaceutical and food safety

Our Mission

Policy

01 Delivering cutting-edge pharmaceuticals/medical devices to medical practices ahead of any other country

Expansion of the pharmaceutical and medical device industry and progress in regenerative medicine technology is a part of the important pillars of the nation’s growth strategy since the industry is recognized as knowledge-intensive and high-value-added, and Japan is at the forefront of regenerative medicine. Japan used to have a problem of the drug and device lag, the time between when medications and devices are approved in foreign countries and when they are finally available in Japan. By the government efforts to speed up the approval process, the trend has improved and the problem is a thing of the past. Japan now promotes efforts to introduce new pharmaceuticals and cutting-edge medical devices that will benefit patients before they are launched in other countries. What is more, as robotics, artificial intelligence and genomics technologies are widely available and regenerative medicine technology advances, more and more companies are accelerating the development of new products that will push the envelope. In response to such trends, the Bureau is working to create an appropriate regulatory environment that enables manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies to develop safe and high-quality products and receive approval for them smoothly so that those products will become available in clinical practice as quickly as possible.

02 Improving food hygiene levels and promoting international standardization

The Bureau is working to ensure that people can enjoy what they eat every day without any undue worries by setting the standards on pesticide residues, etc. in food and production methods based on scientific evidence, providing supervision and instruction on domestically traded products, and making efforts in securing the safety of imported food. In FY2018, the Food Sanitation Act was significantly revised for the first time in 15 years. In consideration of changes in the environment, including food globalization, and in order to improve hygiene levels and promote international standardization, discussions have been taking place toward the mandatory implementation of food hygiene control based on HACCP (an international standard method for analyzing, assessing, and controlling hazards such as food-poisoning bacterial contamination and mixing of foreign objects, etc. in the food manufacturing process) and also the introduction of the Positive List system (a system that permits the use of the substances only whose safety has been assessed in principle) for food containers and packaging in Japan.

03 Strengthening water supply infrastructure to be passed on to future generations

In Japan, water supply services are available to approximately 98% of the total population, and people can drink “safe and tasty water” anytime. However, renewing dilapidated water supply facilities and making them earthquake-resistant have been delayed, resulting in increased risks of water leakage accidents and water supply disruptions. In addition, due to the arrival of a society with a decreasing population, the business conditions are worsening and, particularly, vulnerable small-scale business operators are facing severe issues such as inability to continue water supply services. In order to respond to these issues and to ensure passing of the water supply services to future generations, the MHLW promotes “wide-ranging collaborations” in which multiple municipalities cooperate to do business together, “appropriate asset management” to promote renewing water pipes and making them earthquake-resistant in a planned manner, and “public-private cooperation” to utilize technologies and know-how of the private sector, etc.

Fields under its jurisdiction

Ensuring safety of pharmaceuticals/medical devices
Through approval/certification reviews and safety measures, etc., the Bureau ensures the quality, efficacy, and safety of pharmaceuticals/medical devices with the broad range of and forms.

Development of pharmacy/pharmacist systems
The Bureau aims to promote appropriate use of pharmaceuticals and to realize an environment in which people can receive safe and secure pharmaceutical therapies through planning/ designing of pharmacy/ pharmacist systems, etc.

Ensuring food safety
Food safety in Japan is ensured by flexibly responding to progress in food-related science and technology, globalization of food distribution, and diversification of dietary habits, etc.

Ensuring safe tap water
The Bureau operates water supply related systems such as business licenses of water supply services and formulation of water quality standards, provides financial support for making water pipes earthquake-resistant, and handles damages from water supply disruption in times of disaster.

Development of environmental health industries, etc.
In addition to hygiene regulations and promotion of environmental health industries, including qualification system for barbers/beauticians and approval system for hotels/inn, etc., the Bureau is also responsible for ensuring a healthy environment in buildings, etc.

Hot Topics

Drug abuse prevention
In recent years, increased cannabis abuse among young people due to the spread of erroneous information on the Internet, and increased recidivism rate of stimulant offenders, etc. have become issues. Taking into consideration these circumstances, efforts such as strict control of drugs and public enlightenment are being promoted day by day based on the “5th 5-Year Strategy to Prevent Drug Abuse” formulated in August 2018.

Acceptance of new foreign human resources
In order to respond to the worsening labour shortage, a new system to accept foreign human resources with certain expertise/skills who are expected to be work-ready will commence in April 2019. Labour shortage is especially accelerating in the field of building cleaning management for cleaning inside buildings, and this type of business is covered by the new acceptance system. Toward the acceptance of foreign human resources, efforts are currently being made to prepare skills tests, etc.
### Policy

**01 Correcting long working hours through “work-style reform”**

The work-style reform-related laws were established at a regular Diet session in 2018, realizing a significant revision of the Labor Standards Act for the first time in 70 years.

For workers, work-style reform leads to an improvement in work-life balance, and for enterprises, creation of an attractive workplace environment where people can comfortably work lead to improvement in productivity and securing of future human resources. The provisions concerning working hours such as the upper limit of overtime work will be enforced in April 2019 (April 2020 for small and medium-sized enterprises).

The Bureau is working to make it well known in a careful manner by taking various support measures, including the provision of support at consultation contact points, holding of briefings, and establishment of subsidy systems, etc., to have small and medium-sized enterprises nationwide understand the importance of work-style reform and observe the provisions of the laws.

**02 Protecting working conditions for workers at work sites**

The working conditions, including minimum wages and working hours, etc., are stipulated in the Labor Standards Act, etc. “Labor standards inspectors” play the important role of instructing enterprises to comply with these laws and regulations at their work sites. Labour standards inspectors visit enterprises and carefully explain the purpose and content of these laws and regulations to ensure that they understand and observe them. If any violation is found, the inspectors instruct the enterprise concerned to correct it immediately. Furthermore, in case of serious/vicious violations, the inspectors conduct investigations as criminal cases and send each case to the Public Prosecutor’s Office.

Through these efforts, the Bureau is working to realize a society in which the statutory working conditions are ensured and workers can live with a sense of security.

**03 Creating a society with zero accidents (zero industrial accidents)**

The annual number of cases of injuries at workplaces is on an increasing trend again, exceeding 120,000 persons a year, with the number of resulting deaths being almost 1,000. There are as countless many safety and health-related issues at work sites as there are work sites, including “death from overwork” and “mental disorders” due to long working hours, etc. and “occupational cancer” from harmful substances, etc. In order to prevent such industrial accidents and protect safety and health of workers, the Bureau is working on measures that respond to the aging of society, advancement of science and technology, and the shift to services industries.
Policy

01 Promoting labour shortage measures

While the employment conditions are steadily improving, the number of job applications remains significantly larger than the number of job openings, and there has been a serious labor shortage particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to support enterprises in securing of human resources, the Bureau promotes focused matching support by establishing human resource measures corners at major Hello Work offices to provide consultations for fulfilling job openings and implement close employment support for job applications in the areas of labor shortage such as welfare and construction, etc. In addition, in order to support companies’ efforts to promote their workers’ adaptation to the workplace, the Bureau provides them with support such as providing subsidies when they implement measures to improve employment management and productivity, etc.

02 Accepting foreign human resources

As labour shortage in small and medium-sized enterprises, etc. is becoming serious, a new status of residence is established in April 2019 to accept foreign human resources with certain expertise/skills who are expected to be work-ready in the industrial fields having difficulty in securing human resources even after making efforts to secure domestic human resources and improve productivity. In order to develop an environment in which foreign workers can effectively utilize their abilities, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare provides advice/guidance, etc. for appropriate employment management at Hello Work offices based on the “Guidelines for Employment Management of Foreign Nationals” in which the rules that companies employing foreign workers must follow and the matters that should be considered are compiled.

03 Realizing an “ageless society”

While the population is declining, it is important to realize a society in which elderly people can utilize their experience and knowledge gained over their years of work, regardless of their age, according to their motivation. Therefore, companies are obligated to take employment security measures for all people wishing to work until age 65. In addition, the Bureau is working to provide subsidies to companies that have extended continued employment for people older than 65 or that have extended mandatory retirement age, etc., to provide support to elderly job seekers through ageless support contact points at Hello Work offices, etc., and secure diverse employment opportunities at Silver Human Resource Centers, etc.

Fields under its jurisdiction

Nationwide job placement services

The Bureau is working to match job seekers with recruiting companies by providing close employment consultations and job placement services, etc. to both of them at Hello Work offices.

Operating employment insurance systems

In order to stabilize people’s lives and employment and promote employment, unemployment benefits are provided to those who are unemployed or who took childcare family care leave or are receiving education/training, etc.

Planning of employment measures

The Bureau analyzes the employment indices such as the unemployment rate and active job openings-to-applications ratio, etc. to respond to them and flexibly plan/implement employment measures as needed.

Promoting active roles of diverse human resources

The Bureau promotes active roles of diverse human resources by supporting people having some difficulty in being employed, including elderly people and persons with disabilities, etc., and by developing an environment for accepting foreign human resources.

Establishing labour market rules

In order to promote matching between job seekers and recruiting companies appropriately and smoothly, while utilizing the power of private companies, the Bureau is establishing the rules for worker dispatching and job placement services.

Hot Topics

Improving employment situation

The unemployment rate remains at a low level comparable to that before the bubble economy, and the active job openings-to-applications ratio is at a high level comparable to that during the period of high economic growth. In addition, the active job openings-to-applications ratio exceeded 1.0 in all prefectures, and the active job openings-to-applications ratio for regular employees exceeded 1.0. As just described, the employment situation is steadily improving.

Promotion of employment for persons with disabilities

Creating workplaces where persons with disabilities can play more active roles and which can lead to the realization of workplaces where all people can work comfortably. The Bureau is working to develop systems to provide consistent support, from the preparation stage for employment through workplace adaptation, including team support for persons with disabilities wishing to be employed by relevant institutions mainly at Hello Work offices and support for persons with disabilities and companies by job coaches (workplace adaptation assistants) in accordance with characteristics of disabilities, etc.

As a safety net for employment, the Bureau aims to realize a society in which each worker can create his/her own future and in which diverse opportunities are provided to people with motivation by implementing (1) job placement services utilizing nationwide network, (2) employment insurance system to provide workers with income compensation when they become unemployed, and (3) employment measures toward the realization of “work-style reform” in an integrated manner through over 500 Hello Work offices nationwide.
Creating a diverse employment environment in which everyone can play an active role

Our Mission

Both workers and work styles are becoming more and more diverse. The Bureau is working to promote diverse employment environments in which everyone can play an active role, including the development of workplace environment in which everyone can play active roles, improvement of employment environments for non-regular workers such as part-time workers and fixed-term workers, achievement of good balance between work and child care or family care, promotion of more flexible work styles such as telework, and measures for realizing an affluent and stable work life, etc.

Policy

01 Promoting more active roles of women

The number of female workers increased by approximately 2.88 million over the last six years, but the employment rate of women of child-rearing age and the percentage of female managers are still lower than those of other countries. For this reason, the Bureau aims to revise relevant laws to further promote active roles of women, including strengthening of companies’ efforts such as formulation of action plans, provision of information on the participation and advancement of females and promotion of certification systems (Eruboshi), etc., based on the Act on Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace. In addition, measures to prevent sexual harassment and harassment related to pregnancy/childbirth/child care leave/family care leave, etc. are promoted.

02 Realizing “equal pay for equal work”

The government promotes “work style reforms” for realizing dynamic engagement of all citizens. The measure that is positioned as one of the main pillars is realizing “equal pay for equal work”. The Bureau aims to prohibit the irrational differences in treatment between non-regular workers, which account for approximately 40% of all workers, and regular workers and improve treatment of non-regular workers.

Through these efforts, the Bureau will ensure that workers can continue to work with consent to their treatment no matter what kind of work style they choose, thereby allowing them to choose diverse and flexible work styles.

03 Supporting work-life balance

While approximately 50% of women leave their jobs before or after giving birth, the percentage of men who took child care leave remains quite low at around 5%.

In order to develop an environment in which both men and women can have a good balance between work and child/family care and continue to work, the Bureau promotes the use of a child/family care leave system and systems for working reduced hours, etc., and provides support to, and raises awareness of, enterprises.

In addition, in response to the declining birth rate, the Bureau supports formulation of action plans, etc. based on the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children and promotes certification systems (Kurumin, etc.). Furthermore, the Bureau promotes the development of an environment in which employees can easily take annual paid leave, etc. by providing examples of improving ways to work and take leave.

Hot Topics

Strengthening measures against workplace bullying

The number of consultations at Prefectural Labour Bureaus concerning “bullying/harassment” in workplaces was approximately 72,000 (FY2017), the highest among all consultations for six consecutive years.

For this reason, while drastically strengthening measures against workplace bullying is expected by the society, the Bureau aims to revise relevant laws to obligate companies to take measures to prevent workplace bullying, etc.

Telework

Telework refers to a flexible work style that enables effective use of time and place by utilizing ICT (information and communication technologies). Telework can be a mechanism for balancing work and child/family care, contributing to the realization of work-life balance, and enabling individuals of diverse skills and backgrounds to demonstrate their abilities. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare promotes enterprises with support for introducing telework and prepares a work environment for those working via telework on consignment in a self-employed manner.
The Bureau is making comprehensive efforts in providing independence support for single parent families, including providing subsidies for fertility treatment, etc., and secure/train nursery teachers, etc., and improve their quality.

The Bureau is working to develop day care centers, including promoting the development of a pregnant women-friendly environment through the use of Maternity Mark on public transportation services and other measures. These services will be made free of charge in October 2019 by utilizing financial resources from consumption tax.

Planning and designing of declining birthrate measures

The Bureau is working to analyze the factors of declining birthrate and plan/design new declining birthrate measures with an eye to the future, including measures to support balancing with work.

The progress in the declining birthrate leads to a critical condition that could shake the very foundation of Japanese society and economy. In order to overcome the declining birthrate, we must realize a society in which everyone wishing to have children and raise them can do so without undue worries. In addition, it must be ensured that all children can grow to be healthy both physically and mentally, regardless of the conditions and environment in which they are born and raised. For children who will lead and create the future of Japan, the Bureau supports people of child-rearing age and protects children’s smiling faces.

Enhancement of childcare support services

The Bureau is working to develop day care centers, after-school children’s clubs, and community childcare support bases, etc., and secure/train nursery teachers, etc., and improve their quality.

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Comprehensive support for single-parent families

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Promotion of health for mothers and children

The Bureau is working to promote maternal and child health, including prenatal checkups, health checkups for infants and pregnant women, and postnatal care, etc., provide subsidies for fertility treatment, etc., and ensure physical and mental health of parents and children throughout the period of pregnancy/child birth/child-rearing.

The Bureau is working to improve labour conditions of these workers at the same time.

The Bureau is working to realize a society in which anyone can raise his/her children without undue worries while working by implementing these measures in an integrated manner.

Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Shintani visiting an after-school children’s club

For the best interests of all children, the Bureau is working to implement social care in which children are raised by the whole society.

In order to enable these children to attain self-esteem in relationships with adults and gain abilities to establish trusting relationships with others, it is necessary to provide them with a warm and family-like environment to the extent possible.

Therefore, the Bureau strives to improve the quality of relevant facilities by making them smaller in size and regionally distributed, and promotes the securing of and establishment of support systems for “foster parents” who accept and raise children in their homes.

Planning and designing of declining birthrate measures

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Policy

01 Working to eliminate wait-listed children to support balancing child care with work

Measures to eliminate wait-listed children are one of the most important issues in Japan. While women are playing more active roles in the workplace, the Bureau aims to eliminate wait-listed children, under the “Plan for Raising Children with Peace of Mind”, by working to secure day care service providers for 320,000 children by the end of FY2020 so that it will be sufficient even when the employment rate of women reaches 80%, which is equivalent to that in other developed countries.

The Bureau also aims to eliminate the issue of wait-listed children for after-school children’s clubs known as the “barriers to the first grade of elementary school”, under the “New After-School Children Plan”, by working to secure service providers for 250,000 children by FY2021 and a total of 300,000 children by FY2023.

In order to secure these service providers, securing human resources to support them is also essential. The Bureau is also working to improve labour conditions of these workers at the same time.

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Senior Vice Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Shintani visiting an after-school children’s club

02 Drastically strengthening measures to prevent child abuse

There should be no abuse of children who will lead the future. However, the number of cases of consultations is increasing every year, and tragic cases in which children die from abuse are continuing to occur.

In July 2018, “Immediate comprehensive measures” were formulated with the first priority given to protecting children’s lives. Decisions were made on the thorough implementation of the rules to protect children and drastic strengthening of child guidance centers, etc., and the “New Plan”, which strengthens systems of child guidance centers and municipalities by increasing the number of personnel by approximately 2,000 by FY2020, etc., was decided. Hereafter, revising relevant laws to further strengthen child guidance centers and secure expertise is also being considered.

The Bureau is making the utmost efforts to create a society in which children’s lives are protected by establishing a system in which all children are provided with seamless support, from early response to prevent child abuse, to immediate response when abuse occurs, and independence support when children suffer abuse.

03 Assuring healthy growth, etc. of all children

In Japan, there are approximately 45,000 children who cannot live with their family for various reasons such as having no guardian or being abused, etc., and many of them are living in a group in foster homes, etc.

In order to enable these children to attain self-esteem in relationships with adults and gain abilities to establish trusting relationships with others, it is necessary to provide them with a warm and family-like environment to the extent possible.

Therefore, the Bureau strives to improve the quality of relevant facilities by making them smaller in size and regionally distributed, and promotes the securing of and establishment of support systems for “foster parents” who accept and raise children in their homes.

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Fields under its jurisdiction

Policy Bureau

Supporting child-rearing generations to protect children’s smiling faces

Our Mission

Free early childhood education/day care services

Early childhood education/day care services are the basis for developing lifetime characters of children, and therefore all children must be provided with opportunities to receive such important services. These services will be made free of charge in October 2019 by utilizing financial resources from consumption tax.

The Bureau aims to make a major shift toward a society in which they can have children and raise them without undue worries by supporting people in the child-rearing generation and bearing financial burdens by the whole society.

Promoting the development of a pregnant women-friendly environment through the use of Maternity Mark

Child-Rearing Generation Comprehensive Support Centers

Child-Rearing Generation Comprehensive Support Centers help resolve issues that many people wish to consult about regarding worries and anxieties that they have during the period from pregnancy and child birth to child-rearing in one place without visiting different departments or facilities. Public health nurses, etc. will respond to various consultation requests on pregnancy/child birth/child-rearing as coordinators to provide support in a broad range of fields, including medical care, health, and welfare, etc., in an integrated manner. The Bureau is working to support their establishment for nationwide expansion by FY2020.

For the best interests of all children, the Bureau is working to implement social care in which children are raised by the whole society.

Planning and designing of declining birthrate measures

The Bureau is working to analyze the factors of declining birthrate and plan/design new declining birthrate measures with an eye to the future, including measures to support balancing with work.
Victims’ Relief Bureau

Social Welfare and War

Realizing a regionally cohesive society

Our Mission

The Bureau is working to promote broad social welfare efforts, including the development of a social welfare juridical person system and foundation of welfare by securing human resources to be engaged in welfare, providing support to people having difficulties making a living and persons with disabilities, implementing measures against suicide, and establishing community welfare, etc., as well as consolation of the war dead and relief for bereaved families.

Policy

01 Realizing a regionally cohesive society

Due to the decreasing population and changes in family structures and local communities, various issues have been occurring. While issues that individuals and households have, including "long-term care and child care" and "social withdrawal ("hikkomori") and needy", etc., original and inventive community efforts that cross the vertical segmentation among systems in different fields such as those for elderly people, persons with disabilities, and children, etc., and the relationship between "supporters" and "receivers", including the establishment of one stop consultation contact points and a system to resolve issues mainly by volunteer organizations, etc., are beginning to take effect.

By supporting these efforts, the Bureau aims to realize a "regionally cohesive society" to enable people to live in ways they like in their local communities even with various life issues.

02 Supporting community life of persons with disabilities

The Bureau provides community life support for persons with disabilities to enable people to live a life of their choosing even with disabilities. The MHLW has been improving welfare services for persons with disabilities such as in-home long-term care and employment support, etc., and the number of users of welfare services for persons with disabilities and the amount of benefits provided have been increasing over the last 10 years.

Under such circumstances, securing human resources for welfare services for persons with disabilities is an important issue, and therefore the Bureau is working to improve their labour conditions.

In addition, the Bureau is also making new efforts that match diversified disabilities such as further promoting measures against addiction to gambling and drugs, etc. The Bureau will continue to work to enhance various measures so as to enable persons with disabilities to live active lives in their communities.

03 Recovering the remains of the war dead and holding memorial ceremonies

Approximately 3.1 million people died in the World Wars. Among them, approximately 2.4 million people died overseas (including Okinawa and Iwo Jima), and approximately 1.1 million remains of them have not been returned to their hometown yet. It is the national responsibility to recover the remains of the war dead, and the Bureau is working to recover as many remains as possible and return them to their families.

In addition, the Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead is held annually on August 15 at the Nippon Budokan, which is attended by the Emperor and Empress, to console the souls of the war dead and wish for peace. We must not forget that the peace and prosperity we enjoy today are founded on the ultimate sacrifices of the war dead.

Fields under its jurisdiction

Promotion of community welfare

Toward resolving various life issues, the Bureau promotes the development of a comprehensive support system for realizing a "regionally cohesive society" in which community members support each other to create individual lives, purposes of life, and a community.

Support for people having difficulties making a living

The public assistance system guarantees minimum standards of a healthy and cultural life. With the independence support system for needy persons, comprehensive support that takes into consideration the entire life, including work, livelihood, and housing, etc., is provided to people having difficulties making a living at a stage before receiving public assistance. The Bureau will continue to provide various support through this multi-tiered safety net so that all people can live independent lives.

Developing social welfare foundations

The Bureau ensures systems for providing welfare services that will play important roles in an aging society in the future through the strengthening of governance/ fiscal discipline of management organizations of social welfare corporations that are responsible for providing welfare services and securing/developing welfare/ long-term care human resources, including foreigner.

Promoting measures against suicide

While the number of people who have taken their lives has been decreasing in recent years, it still remains at around 20,000 a year. Based on the idea that suicide is a death to which many have been driven and is a social issue that can be prevented, the Bureau is working to prevent suicides.

Enhancement of measures for persons with disabilities

The Bureau aims to realize a society in which persons with disabilities can live active lives in their communities. The Bureau promotes the provision of welfare services for persons with disabilities such as in-home long-term care and employment support, etc. and psychiatric care.

Consolation of the war dead and relief for their bereaved families

The Bureau is working to conduct the consolation project for the souls of the war dead including recovering the remains of the war dead and pilgrimages, etc., provide relief pension benefits to the victims’ bereaved family and wounded/sick retired soldiers, and provide support for the Japanese who were left behind in China, etc.
Supporting a society in which people can live in ways they like in their local communities

Our Mission

While Japan is experiencing an unprecedented super aging society, the Bureau promotes welfare and long-term care measures for elderly people, including a long-term care insurance system, with the aim of supporting elderly people and their families and ensuring that they can continue to live in ways they like until the end of their lives.

Policy

01 Innovations in long-term care sites

As the progressive aging of society (+ increased long-term care needs), it is necessary to respond to a new important issue of rapidly decreasing population of the working generation (+ strengthened labour force constraint) toward 2040 while establishing an community-based integrated care system.

In order to do so, while making utmost efforts to secure long-term care human resources by continually improving their labour conditions as well as reducing the burden and making the work more efficient at long-term care sites, it is essential to utilize their specialties and maintain/improve quality of services.

For the former, the further increase in wages mainly of leader-class social worker will commence in October 2019.

For the latter, pilot programs, etc. are implemented by setting (1) review of work flow and division of work, (2) support for the introduction/utilization of nursing care robots and ICT toward reducing mental/physical burden and making recording work more efficient, and (3) active role of the elderly for their neighbors.

02 Long-term care prevention and community development

While the population of the working generation is rapidly decreasing, it is essential to maintain/improve social vitality. Under the long-term care insurance system, long-term care prevention and daily life support are promoted in addition to long-term care services. The Bureau promotes long-term care prevention efforts to enable elderly people to continue to live independent daily lives longer by preventing them from requiring long-term care or their condition from becoming severe to the extent possible.

Diverse efforts have been implemented in each municipality, including promoting the development of the “places to attend” mainly implemented by community members according to the actual situations of the regions, etc. The Bureau supports systems aimed at not only health promotion but also promotion of community development, which takes advantage of relevant systems, through a mechanism to enable elderly people to continue to live while maintaining community ties such as social participation and activities.

03 Promotion of national strategy on dementia

Dementia is a common disease in Japan that anyone can be concerned with. In Japan, one in four elderly people already have or are at high risk of dementia, and it is predicted that approximately 7 million people will suffer from dementia in 2025. It is also the area of high international concern, and national strategies are formulated to promote measures in many countries.

In Japan, the “New Orange Plan”, a comprehensive strategy to accelerate dementia measures, was formulated to promote various efforts. In order to promote even stronger measures through a concerted effort by the entire government, the Ministerial Meeting on Promotion of Dementia Measures was established in December 2018. In collaboration with “inclusion” efforts toward a “dementia barrier-free” society such as increasing the number of “dementia supporters” to support people with dementia and their families and “dementia cafes”, etc. and in cooperation with local governments, researchers, and private companies, etc., the Bureau plans to promote cross-sectional efforts to develop an environment in which people with dementia and their families can live comfortably by setting “risk reduction” efforts through research and demonstration as the main pillar.

Promotion of preventive long-term care

In order to prevent elderly people from requiring long-term care or their condition from becoming severe, the Bureau promotes long-term care prevention efforts in each municipality, and visualizes/shares the know-how in advanced cases to promote efforts for long-term care prevention/independence support.

Prevention of elderly abuse

For elderly people to continue to live without undue worries, their dignity must be maintained. Therefore, elderly abuse must not be allowed, and the Bureau promotes elderly abuse prevention efforts for early detection and immediate response, including sharing of advanced cases and conducting training, etc.

Hot Topics

Aiming at “no one forced to leave their jobs for long-term care”

With the aim of realizing a condition such that “no one will be forced to leave his/her job for long-term care”, which comprises one of the three new points of Abenomics, the Bureau is making comprehensive efforts to secure long-term care professionals in addition to promoting the development of long-term care service providers for approximately 500,000 people. In particular, in order to eliminate the wage differential between the occupation of long-term care and other industries, the Bureau is working to promote further improvement of labour conditions of long-term care professionals at a public expense of approximately 100 billion yen to secure long-term care professionals.

Position of Japan’s long-term care insurance in the world

Japan has drawn significant international attention regarding how to overcome an unprecedented aging society unlike any other in the world, how the long-term care insurance system functions to do it, and what roles the system plays.

In addition to directly presenting the long-term care insurance system of Japan to important persons and researchers who have visited Japan, the Bureau presents the efforts and experiences of Japan at the international conferences such as the Triilateral Policy Dialogue on Aging among China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea and Japan-Germany Symposium on Aging, etc.
Health Insurance Bureau

Open the way to the future of the health insurance system

Our Mission

Policy

01 Establishing sustainable health insurance systems
The characteristics of the Japanese health insurance systems include that (1) they are universal health insurance systems, (2) they are dual systems consisting of employees’ insurance and regional social insurance, (3) medical institutions may be freely operated and patients are guaranteed to have free access to them. The Japanese health insurance systems, which have all these characteristics and enable everyone to receive high quality medical care with medium to low burden using an insurance certificate, are drawing the attention of the world. In recent years, however, medical expenditure has been increasing due to the progress of aging and advances in medical services, etc. The “most important mission” of the Health Insurance Bureau is to respond to these environmental changes surrounding health insurance systems while firmly maintaining its world-class characteristics.

03 Medical fee revision
The medical fees are the remunerations that health insurance-covered medical institutions and pharmacies receive for providing health and medical services, and are applied nationwide utilizing a point system in which one point is calculated as 10 yen. The medical fees are determined once every two years by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare. In recent years, medical expenditure has been increasing due to the progress of aging and advances in medical services, etc. The “most important mission” of the Health Insurance Bureau is to respond to these environmental changes surrounding health insurance systems while firmly maintaining its world-class characteristics.

02 Realizing health throughout life
The average life expectancy of Japanese people is 84.2 years, and is at the world’s highest level (according to the 2016 WHO data). The life expectancy of more than half of Japanese women already exceeds 90 years. In anticipation of the coming of a “100-year life society”, it is necessary to extend healthy life expectancy according to the extended average life expectancy. In order to do so, the “mission for the new era” of the Health Insurance Bureau is to make a shift from “treatment-oriented” medical care to “prevention-oriented” medical care. The Bureau is working to implement “data health reform” in which receipt data on health insurance and long-term care insurance, etc. are collected nationwide to have this big data analyzed and the results are utilized to the provision of high quality insurance-covered medical services, and “health service reform” in which medical care/long-term care/health checkup data of individuals is analyzed in regions mainly by municipalities to provide health services (exercise/oral/nutrition programs) according to the individual conditions, etc.

In recent years, extension of healthy life expectancy, enhancement of preventive/health promotion efforts, and the realization of the universal health insurance system – to realize the safety of medical care by sharing the risk of falling into a situation requiring medical care that everyone may face – is universal. In order to make this basic philosophy sustainable, our mission is to maintain the balance between the people’s needs for medical care and the cost burden.

Fields under its jurisdiction

Health insurance
The Bureau is responsible for planning and designing of the health insurance system for workers of private companies and their families.

National health insurance
The Bureau is responsible for planning and designing of the national health insurance, which covers people not subscribing to health insurance such as self-employed persons and those engaged in agriculture.

Medical care system for the elderly
The Bureau is responsible for planning and designing of the medical care system for older people aged 75 and over.

Setting of medical fees/prices of drugs, etc.
The Bureau operates the Central Social Insurance Medical Council to revise the medical fees, which are the remunerations for providing medical services, and the prices of drugs, etc. once every two years.

Disease prevention and health promotion
The Bureau is responsible for planning and designing of preventive/promotion efforts to prevent the onset and progression of lifestyle diseases by utilizing medical big data, etc.

Statistical surveys on health insurance systems
The Bureau is responsible for mathematical and statistics work concerning the national health insurance system, medical care system for older people aged 75 and over, and other health insurance system.

Hot Topics

Preventing the onset and progression of diseases
As preventive/promotion efforts of insurers, specific health checkups focused on visceral fat accumulation (metabolic syndrome) and prevention of progression of diabetic nephropathy that is the primary disease for dialysis have been promoted. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare promotes the collection of successful case examples and their horizontal expansion.

Revision of systems for appropriate/efficient operation of health insurance systems
In recent years, extension of healthy life expectancy, enhancement of preventive/promotion efforts, and efficient provision of quality medical care through promotion of informatization in the area of medical care have become necessary. In order to respond to such social demands, the Draft Act on Partial revision of the Health Insurance Act, etc. was submitted to the Diet in 2019. The main pillars of this Draft Act include centralized management of qualification information among insurers, creation of a system for interlinked analysis and provision of information on the status of costs for medical/long-term care benefits, establishment of a framework to implement health services and long-term care prevention for elderly people in an integrated manner in municipalities, and appropriate requirement for the certification of dependents, etc.

Revision of systems for appropriate/efficient operation of health insurance systems

Policy

01 Establishing sustainable health insurance systems

03 Medical fee revision

02 Realizing health throughout life
Pension is the main pillar in people’s post-retirement life. While the declining birthrate and aging population is rapidly progressing, the Pension Bureau is working to establish a pension system that is sustainable in the future and in which people can have a sense of security and smoothly provide pension benefits, etc. in cooperation with the Japan Pension Service.

Our Mission

Realizing “intergenerational support” that will continue for the next 100 years

Policy

01 Balancing “sustainability” and “sufficiency of benefits”

Public pension is the main pillar in people’s post-retirement life. The Pension Bureau has been addressing the difficult issue of securing the “sufficiency of benefits” and at the same time improving the sustainability of the system while declining birthrate and aging are rapidly progressing. In 2004, as the insurance premium burden of the actively working generation was expected to be excessive in the future, a drastic reform was carried out to introduce a new framework in which the upper limit for increasing insurance premiums is fixed and the benefit level is automatically adjusted within the limit of financial resources. Increasing insurance premiums has already been stopped in September 2017, reaching the upper limit, and the Bureau will now address the issue of how to secure the benefit level within the limit of financial resources. The Bureau will continue to support voluntary efforts for individual life plans in old age.

02 Operation of the public pension system that is trusted by the people

In order to ensure stable operation of pension systems and a fair balance in burdens, the Bureau is working in cooperation with the Japan Pension Service to promote measure to promote application of Employees’ Pension Insurance and measures to collect National Pension premium payments and accurately, reliably, and promptly carry out each work, including pension record management, application, collection, payment, and consultation, etc. In addition, the Bureau is working to operate the public pension system that is trusted by people through dissemination and promotion of “Nenkin Net” services that enable people to check their pension records, etc. anytime via PCs and smartphones, etc.

03 Supporting individual life plans

Private pensions (corporate pensions/personal pensions), which are provided in addition to public pension, are available as systems to support life in old age. For example, iDeCo (individual-type defined contribution pension plan) is one of those which individuals can subscribe to on a voluntary basis and select the amount of premiums and investment method. Preferential tax treatment is available for the premiums and investment profits of iDeCo, and therefore not only those in old age but also those of the active generation can enjoy the benefits. It was revised in January 2017 to allow basically anyone to subscribe to the plan, and the number of subscribers exceeded one million at the end of August 2018. In addition, support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises are taken to enable them to utilize private pensions regardless of their size.

Hot Topics

Nenkin-Net

Public pension is a system on which life in old age is based, and checking the pension records is important for designing future plans. “Nenkin Net” can be used on a PC or smartphone to check the up-to-date pension records and estimated amount of future pension benefits, create some written notifications to be submitted to the Japan Pension Service such as an application form for special exemption of pension contribution payment for students, and check/download various notices such as “pension benefit payment notice”, etc. The Bureau will continue to promote dissemination/publicity of “Nenkin Net” as a useful tool for checking records such as pension contribution payment status, etc.
Director-General for Human Resources Development

Realizing the development of economy and society through “human resource development”

Our Mission

Designing one’s own work life and acquiring skills and knowledge. The Director-General aims to realize a society in which all people can utilize their abilities and actively work by closely supporting their challenges for the future through the development/improvement of vocational abilities.

Policy

01 Supporting re-employment and skills development through Hello Training (public vocational training)

Toward re-employment and skills development of unemployed workers, the Director-General conducts diverse vocational training in the fields of manufacturing, long-term care, and IT in cooperation with prefectures and private education/training institutions, taking into consideration regional/industrial needs, etc. In particular, the Director-General is working to promote long-term training courses for one to two years to lead non-regular employees to stable employment by acquiring national qualifications, etc. and to promote training courses toward re-employment for women raising children.

In addition, for employed workers, vocational training has been implemented to improve specialized knowledge and technologies required in their work to provide support for improving productivity and skill/technologies at enterprises.

02 Stable employment of young people who will lead the next generation

While the young labour population is decreasing, the Director-General provides close employment and training support at Hello Work for New Graduates and Hello Work for Young People, etc. to secure stable employment for young people who will lead the next generation. In particular, the Director-General establishes a system to provide workplace information under the Youth Employment Promotion Act to enable youth to make appropriate job choices at the time of graduation when their career development starts and to improve their vocational abilities while gaining experience.

In addition, the Director-General provides specialized consultation support at “Regional Youth Support Stations” for vocational independence of young unemployed people who are not in education, employment or training (so-called NEETs), and is working to enhance support to people of the “employment ice age generation”.

03 Promoting “visualization” of vocational abilities and skills promotion

In order to enable workers to display their abilities and companies to clearly indicate the abilities that they require workers to have in an easy-to-understand manner, it is important to develop an evaluation system as “criteria” for vocational abilities. National Trade Skills Test, which is a system to evaluate abilities, covers approximately 130 job categories, including machining, carpentry, and financial planning, etc., and supports students and young people to improve their skills with a goal.

In addition, efforts are being made in improving skill levels and promoting skills through National Skills Competition in which young people who will lead manufacturing of the next generation use their “skills” to compete for national championship and “Award for Outstandingly Skilled Workers (Great Craftsmen in the present world)” program, which grants awards to workers who are regarded as the leading experts in their fields. The Director-General will make the utmost efforts to the bidding activities to host the 2023 WorldSkills Competition in Aichi Prefecture, Japan and work to develop national respect for skills, etc.

Implementation of Hello Training (public vocational training) by the government and prefectures

For those seeking re-employment by acquiring skills, those willing to further improve their skills at workplaces, and persons with disabilities, etc., the Director-General provides training opportunities as a safety net for employment.

Support for voluntary career development by workers

The Director-General supports voluntary career development by individuals through promoting the use of job cards that can be utilized as a tool for designing future career and demonstrating vocational abilities, promoting career consultations to provide guidance/advice on designing career plans, and providing training and education benefits that subsidize part of the costs of courses that workers take, etc.

Support for human resource development by enterprises

The Director-General provides support to enterprises that are making efforts in human resource development through the subsidies (human resource development promotion subsidies) for the costs of training conducted for their employees, etc. and accredited vocational training systems under which the prefectural governors certify trainings independently provided by companies.

Vocational skills evaluations and skills promotion

The Director-General is working on the development of a framework in which abilities of individuals can be objectively evaluated by promoting trade skills tests implemented by the government and prefectures and certification systems of each enterprise/industry, etc., and skills promotion through skills competitions.

Technical cooperation with developing nations

The Director-General contributes to the “development of human resources” who are expected to play roles in economic growth in developing regions, etc. by temporarily accepting foreigners from developing countries, etc. in Japan to participate in the Technical Intern Training Program in which trade skills are transferred through on-the-job-training, etc.

Outstandingly Skilled Workers (Great Craftsmen in the present world) program

Outstandingly Skilled Workers (Great Craftsmen in the present world) program, which grants awards to workers who are regarded as the leading experts in their fields. The Director-General will make the utmost efforts to the bidding activities to host the 2023 WorldSkills Competition in Aichi Prefecture, Japan and work to develop national respect for skills, etc.

Ensuring appropriate implementation of the Technical Intern Training Act

Technical Intern Training Program is a system for international contribution aimed at accepting people from developing countries to take on-the-job training at Japanese enterprises, etc., who will then go back to their home countries to utilize the skills and knowledge learned and actively work.

However, the new Technical Intern Training Act was enforced in November 2017 in consideration of indications that some enterprises do not properly understand the purpose of this system, and there are cases of inappropriate acceptance. Under the new system, the management and supervision systems are strengthened, including the introduction of a supervising organization approval system and a technical intern training plan certification system for each technical intern trainee, etc. The Director-General will work to ensure appropriate implementation of the system and contribute to human resource development in developing countries through skills transfer.
Director-General for General Policy and Evaluation

Creating the grand design and future image of social security/labour policies

Our Mission

The Director-General plays the role of a control center of social security policies within the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and creates the grand design and future image of policies, taking into consideration changes in social and economic situations, including declining birthrate, aging population, and technological innovations, etc.

Policy

01 Establishment of a social security system for all generations

As a 100-year life society is coming in on us, the Director-General is working to establish a "social security system for all generations" in which all citizens can play active roles longer and more healthily, and all generations can have a sense of security. As a control center for promoting reforms, the Director-General plays the role of creating the grand design of policies.

Toward the year 2025 in which the so-called baby boomer generation turns 75 or older, the Director-General has been working on a "comprehensive reform of social security and tax" to promote both an enhancement/stabilization and prioritization/optimization in the respective areas of measures for declining birthrate, medical/long-term care, and pension while securing revenue from the increased consumption tax rate.

Looking even further into the future, in order to work on future reform toward the year 2040 in which children of the baby-boom generation will become elderly, causing a decrease in the population of the working generations to further progress, the "Headquarters for Social Security/Work-Style Reform in Anticipation of 2040" was established within the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to promote cross-sectional discussions among departments and bureaus. More concretely, the Director-General is working on three agendas, namely "development of an environment for diverse employment/social participation of elderly people, etc."; "extension of healthy life expectancy that is the prerequisite for employment and social participation", and "productivity improvement by medical/welfare service reforms under stricter labour force requirements", and continuing to promote discussions on "review of benefits and burdens" to ensure the sustainability of social security systems.

02 Responses to new issues

The Director-General promotes discussions with academics and experts on the impacts of new technologies such as AI and IoT on employment and work styles and the responses.

In addition, the Director-General promotes work-style reform not only through regulations but also utilizing "visualization" methods by launching a comprehensive workplace information site "Shokubo-Labo" on which workplace information such as that on work styles and recruitment status of companies can be retrieved/compared.

"White Paper on the Labour Economy" has been published every year with the aim of further deepening labour-management deliberations, etc. by presenting the current status and issues surrounding the Japanese labour economy using statistics data and example cases of efforts of companies. In the 2018 edition of the White Paper, which marks the 70th edition since the publication of the first edition in 1949, an analysis was conducted with the theme of "ideal human resource development according to diversified work styles".

In the area of social security, social impact bond (SIB) is drawing attention as a new method to resolve complex and diverse social issues such as prevention of lifestyle diseases and support for stay-at-home people. For SIB, business operators receive donations and investments from various private entities, including individuals, and work on social businesses. Drawing human resources and funds from the private sector is important, and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare is discussing the issues involved in utilizing SIB in the area of health and welfare.

03 Responses to cross-sectional political issues of the government

In the most important issues of the government such as "dynamic engagement of all citizens", "work-style reform", "revolution in human resource development", and "social security system for all generations", policies in the area of social security and labour hold a prominent position. The Director-General promotes the implementation of policies by considering how policy resources of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare can be utilized to resolve the issues of the whole nation.

Since social security/labour policies relate to policies in the areas outside of health, labour, and welfare administration such as local administration and economic/industrial policies, etc., the Director-General discusses policies from various viewpoints on the issue of a society with further progress in a declining birthrate and aging population in cooperation with other ministries and agencies working on relevant efforts. In addition, the Director-General plays the role of contacting and coordinating with entities outside of the Ministry and supervising within the Ministry to design policies from a broad perspective not limited within the boundary of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, including promoting the provision of information in the areas of health, labour, and welfare and reviewing administrative procedures from the viewpoint of the people while proceeding with discussions with members of the Diet and private sector experts.

Other than the above, the Director-General promotes such efforts as regulatory reform, national strategic special zones, decentralization of authority, regional revitalization, and tax system reform, etc. in health, labour, and welfare administration.

Foreign human resources and social security

The number of foreign nationals staying in Japan is expected to increase in the future, and the entire government will aim to realize a society in which Japanese and foreign nationals can live together. For the issues in the area of social security to enable foreign nationals to gain employment and live in Japan without undue worries, the Director General discusses them from a cross-system point of view and implements necessary measures in cooperation with relevant departments and bureaus.

In the "Comprehensive Measures to Accept and Live Together with Foreign Human Resources" decided at the meeting of relevant cabinet members in December 2018, measures such as promoting their subscription to social insurance in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, developing a system to accept foreign patients in medical institutions, and ensuring appropriate use of health insurance, etc. are included.

Impacts of technological innovations on labour

The impacts of technological innovations such as AI, IoT, big data, and robots, etc. on employment/labour are being discussed in the respective countries, and it is pointed out that these technological innovations may cause unemployment. On the other hand, it is also expected to promote more active roles of all workers and improve productivity by disseminating new technologies such as AI. Under such circumstances, these new issues surrounding work styles need to be discussed from medium- and long-term perspectives also in Japan. The Director-General is therefore working with AI experts and experts in legal practice, etc. to concretely understand actual situations and promote discussions.
With the rapid advancement of informatization in recent years, administration based on data and ICT is becoming more and more important. The Director-General for Statistics, Information Policy and Policy Evaluation therefore contributes to national strategies on vital events, employment, and medical care, etc., and promotes designing/planning of comprehensive information policies within social security/labour policies and implementation of policy evaluations.

**Information policies**

The Director-General for Statistics, Information Policy and Policy Evaluation conducts policy evaluation designs, plans, and promotes comprehensive information policies, including promotion of informationization in health, labour, and welfare administration, ensuring of information security, and development of information systems, etc.

**Policy evaluation**


**Statistical survey**

The Director-General for Statistics, Information Policy and Policy Evaluation plans, conducts, and analyzes statistical surveys on vital events, employment, and medical care, etc., and provides the results to support policy planning of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

**Statistical survey**

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Minister’s Secretariat
International Affairs Division

Our Mission
While interdependence with international society is increasing, Japan is expected to contribute to the peace and prosperity of international society as its member. In particular, as the aging of society is progressing in Japan faster than any other country, Japanese social systems are drawing the attention of the world. The International Affairs Division is contributing to the resolution of international issues by utilizing the strength of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare while cooperating with international organizations and foreign countries.

Participation in international organizations
The Division is contributing to the discussions on international issues and ideal policies by participating in WHO (World Health Organization), ILO (International Labour Organization) and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), etc.

Support for developing countries
In order to support human resource development and system establishment, etc. in developing countries, the Division dispatches officials, conducts training, and contributes funds to support programs implemented by international organizations, etc.

Promotion of international health
Japan’s policy for international cooperation is based on the concept of “human security,” which is the pursuit of the right to live with happiness and dignity, ultimately achieving universal health coverage (UHC)*. As a country with universal health insurance system, Japan has been playing a leading role in international society by contributing its knowledge and implementing support programs through the WHO.

In addition, Japan is also working to promote the development of drugs for internationally threatening infectious diseases and tropical diseases that still remain problems in developing countries through participation in international partnership activities.

* Universal health coverage: The situation where everyone can receive basic health services whenever necessary throughout his/her life at an affordable cost.

Promotion of economic partnership
The Division promotes economic partnership/bilateral cooperation in the fields of drugs/medical devices, food sanitation, and labour, etc. through frameworks of EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) and bilateral consultations.

Promotion of policy coordination
The Division promotes policy coordination with foreign countries through frameworks such as G7, G20, ASEAN+3 (the ASEAN with Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea), etc. and disseminates knowledge on Japanese policies to the world.

Promotion of international public relations and information collection
The Division provides Japanese information overseas through cooperation with foreign embassies in Tokyo and a website in English. The Division also collects information on overseas health policies and systems.

Policy

01 Promotion of international health

Improvement of Labour environment in the Asian region
Improvement of labour environment in developing countries not only leads to the achievement of social justice, but also contributes to the development of Japanese economy through integration of high quality development of these countries. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare supports the establishment of worker protection systems in the Asian region through the ILO. More concretely, support programs have been implemented, including improvement of occupational safety and health levels, promotion of human resource development, and eradication of child labour, etc. These efforts are expected to contribute to sustainable development of the Asian region and expand opportunities for Japanese companies to enter overseas markets through improved bilateral relationships.

02 Improvement of Labour environment in the Asian region

Fields under its jurisdiction

International public relations and information collection

Holding G20 Ministers’ Conference in Japan
In 2019, the G20 Summit will be held for the first time in Japan. Japan will lead the discussion as the chair for promoting global economic growth and resolving issues at the global level. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will hold a Health Ministers’ Conference and a Labour and Employment Ministers’ Conference to further enrich Summit discussions. In-depth discussions will take place on UHC and the aging of society at the Health Ministers’ Conference and on “Future of Work” at the Labour and Employment Ministers’ Conference.

Establishment of rules through EPA
During the period from the end of 2018 to the beginning of 2019, the TPP11 Agreement (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership: CPTPP) and the Japan-EU EPA entered into force. The EPA is effective in strengthening the basis of the Japanese economy by integrating the dynamism of growing markets overseas. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare is working to establish the rules in international society in various areas, including drugs/medical devices, food safety, and labour, etc.

General Coordination Division
As a control center for the MHLW, the General Coordination Division overlooks the overall affairs of the Ministry and is responsible for appropriately reviewing the situations of the departments and bureaus and carrying out general coordination of all cases. Moreover, the Division is responsible for contact and coordination with the Diet and respective ministries and agencies in Kasumigaseki, and examines whether laws and regulations on which administrative activities are based are consistent with measures taken by the MHLW and whether the rules of laws and regulations are followed, etc.

Personnel Division
The Personnel Division appropriately conducts personnel management, taking requests for future career and family environments of individual employees into consideration with the aim of building an environment in which they can work with ease. In particular, “work-style reform and reform on how to take leave” have been promoted to improve work-life balance of officials. In addition, the Division is working to improve employees’ abilities by conducting training at the sites of health centers, welfare offices, and Labour Bureaus, etc. for those of a younger age.

Accounts Division
The Accounts Division is responsible for the coordination of budgets for the entire Ministry exceeding 30 trillion yen in budget requests made during the summer and budget compilations at the end of the year. In addition, the Division is also responsible for settlement of accounts, audits, public procurements, management of administrative properties and government buildings, and welfare benefits of government employees, etc.

Regional Bureau Administration Division
As the front-line organizations for the health, labour, and welfare administration in regions, the Regional Bureau Administration Division provides comprehensive supervision and personnel/budgetary support to enable Regional Offices of Health and Welfare and Prefectural Labour Bureaus to fully display their abilities.
For people, for life, for the future

For “people” living in Japan and their “life” not only at present but also for the “future”.

All officials of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare will continue to work as one to promote an ideal health, labour, and welfare administration for the people.