

# Rainbow Times

## Response to Child Abuse and Neglect Cases

### Where the Family Has Moved in Japan



In March 2018, there was an incident in which a 5-year-old girl in Tokyo's Meguro Ward passed away as a result of child abuse. The media has extensively covered the fact that the girl left notes such as "I won't do the same things again, forgive me" in her notebook, as well as the fact that she died from malnutrition without receiving any medical care, as her parents feared their abuse would be discovered. Her mother and father have been arrested on charges of abandonment of parental responsibilities resulting in death. The family had moved from Kagawa Prefecture to Tokyo's Meguro Ward, and a child welfare consultation center was involved in a child abuse case with them before their move. Various issues have been raised with the center's handling of the situation, but the fact that the center could not successfully relay information to the relevant authorities when the family moved has been pointed out in particular. On July 20, the Comprehensive Emergency Policy to Strengthen Child Abuse Prevention Measures was put forth by the government, and guidelines for child welfare consultation centers were also revised.

#### **【Child Welfare Consultation Center Management Guidelines Section】**

##### **"2-6. Transferring Cases and Providing Information to Other Child Welfare Consultation Centers"**

As responses to cases where the family providing support has moved, the two patterns of transferring cases and providing information have been established.

**For transferring cases,** cases in which "support policies have not been decided and research is ongoing" and "guidance from a child welfare officer or ongoing guidance is underway" are applicable. The transfer must be completed within 1 month of the move, and the initial consultation center must continue guidance, while the new consultation center must ensure that there is no gap in assistance.

**For providing information,** information must be provided for cases in which "support was provided by the child welfare consultation center, the situation improved, and support has ended, but there is a possibility that abuse will resume after the move."

In determining urgency, the "Assessment Sheet for Deciding Temporary Protection" from chapter 5 of the "Guide for Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect" will be used. The general rule would be conveying these results, along with the specific background history and current situation in writing, and if the situation is very urgent, information regarding the case must be passed along in person.

It is necessary to pass along cases responsibly while considering what type of support is necessary for each case, based on these common guidelines. It is likely a common occurrence for a family to suddenly move in the midst of an abuse case. It may be important to think carefully about what sort of context there was for the family's move.

\*This is based on the National Child Welfare Consultation Center Agency's "agreement to transfer consultation cases and provide information for moves and temporary returns of children" (2007) applicable to abuse cases.