

Promoting Local Mutual Support-based Welfare Activities: Social Welfare Committees' Plans in Kusatsu and Nagahama

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In Japan's "super-aged" society, the number of people requiring social welfare services is increasing. This is a societal situation that requires responding to not only issues related to nursing care for senior citizens, but also the education of children, the societal participation of disabled people, and independence-building support for individuals needing help. While there is, of course, a need for both the national and local governments to expand their policies, it is also clear that it is difficult to secure financial resources. Seeing local welfare as part of social welfare measures, the national government is trying to ensure that people can live stable lives via the development of informal societal resources and residents' mutual support.

At the same time, while seeking the expansion of formal services, residents are also beginning to become aware of the importance of creating relationships based on active mutual aid. In this paper, I focus on the role of social welfare committees that support local social welfare activities as a way to create such relationships. In areas in which elementary school district-level social welfare committees enthusiastically engage in their work, activities by local residents' associations for mutual support in daily life are particularly advanced. While such committees are based on voluntary participation, they function as places where residents can develop a common understanding of the issues people in the community are facing and exchange information regarding activities to promote their welfare.

Over many years I have been involved in the formulation and progress

management of the local social welfare activity plans of social welfare committees in Kusatsu City and Nagahama City. Drawing from the actual efforts of these committees, I examine the conditions for the development of resident participation-based local welfare activities as well as the perspective of community social workers.