

Support for children/persons with developmental disorders

■ This leaflet is a digest version of “To everyone supporting children/persons with developmental disorders in disaster-affected regions (Part 1-3)”.

In a disaster, persons with developmental disorders and their families face various difficulties. They may not appear to have any trouble at first glance. It is necessary to have some knowledge to be able to deal with difficulties.



★ Check with someone close to the person, such as a family member, who understands the condition and knows how to deal with it.

In this case...

■ **Coping poorly with change** might act strangely out of anxiety and exhibit strong opposition to approaches by others.



Respond like this...

- Give clear instructions in a calm voice.
Say “Please sit on that seat.”
Do not say, “Don’t go there!”
- Give clear details about changes in schedules and places.
Say “There isn’t XXX. We will do YYY.”
Do not pull their hand without any explanation.

■ **Unusual response to sensory stimuli**
Hyperesthesia: They are more sensitive to stimuli. As there are too many people in the evacuation center, they might not enter it.
Hypesthesia: May need medical treatment but fail to show any hint of this in their facial expression.



- Use the corner of a room, a separate room, or a tent to ensure the person has a private space.



- Check health state by looking over their body whether there are any injuries. Do not just ask if they are OK.

■ **Poor at verbal exchange and unable to communicate** problems.

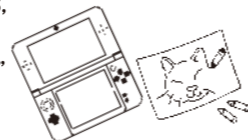


- Explain in a visible manner with letters and drawings or actual objects. Speak to the person individually, using simple and concrete words.

■ **Very anxious when things do not go as expected.**
Gets anxious about school or work being closed, power stoppages, or changes to television programs.



- Maintain daily life activities.
Propose new chores or provide activities to pass time. Provide writing implements and paper, puzzles, picture books, games. Ask them to do simple tasks such as handing out leaflets, or cleaning up a place.
Do not tell them to “just wait” nor “do nothing”



■ **Cannot recognize danger.**
Might go to dangerous places, or touch medical equipments.



- Invite to other interesting games or chores.
- Mark an easily identifiable “X” to avoid going to dangerous places or touching things.

To the Families...

★ Children tend to perceive events that have happened to others as if they had happened to themselves. Moreover, in children with developmental disorders, this could be a more frightful experience than one might expect. It is important to prevent children from watching television broadcast of the disaster, and have them spend time doing something else.

★ Check for health conditions and signs of physical or mental fatigue

Body

★ Sometimes persons with developmental disorders do not notice their own health condition or injury. Left unattended, their condition might get worse, so it is important to meticulously observe and ask questions.

Examples of visual signs:

- Is there shortness of breath, frequent coughing, burns, cuts, or bruises?
- Is the person wearing clothes that are still wet?

Examples of questions to ask:

- “Are you feeling colder than usual?”
- “Do you get dizzy when you walk?”
- “Do you have any bumps on your head or scratches on your arms, legs, or feet?”
- “Do you have a change of clothes?”



Stress

★ Things that are of no problem to most of the people might be quite unpleasant for a person with developmental disorders. They may accumulate stress more easily. There are times when prioritizing the support for the persons with developmental disorders are necessary.

Examples of signs:

- Leaving lots of food uneaten on the plate.
- Slow to react, even to the announcement of arrivals of supplies, looks unsure where to be, and appearing troubled.
- Covering their ears, closing their eyes or showing a facial expression that indicates excessive unpleasant stimuli for them.

Examples of questions to ask:

- “Was there something you couldn’t eat?”
- “Do you know where to wait in line for supplies?”
- “Do you wish you could move to another place?”

★ Check the condition of the family

Family

★ The family can become stressed when they can get no time away from the child or when there is no one who understands about developmental disorders in the evacuation center.

The people who are in charge of the person longest and who are most stressed are the family, and it is effective to provide support for them swiftly.

It can be a great help to the family if there is someone

- who would look after the child for the parents while the family do the chores, such as receiving supplies, going shopping, or completing paperwork at the municipal office, bank.
- who would explain to others about the characteristics of developmental disorders (under consent of the family), when the child is making a big fuss while waiting in line to receive supplies (water, food, and blankets).

★ Check for nearby people who can cooperate



★ Sometimes it is difficult to find an effective way to cope with. In cases where individual consideration is required, it is important to check whether there is someone around who know the person well and can work together to help him/her.

★ After experiencing a disaster, children might stop being able to do things they were able to do before the disaster, and they might tend to get agitated. With children with developmental disorders, generally increased dependency and some degree of regression are permissible.

It is important to allow the children to restore their emotional stability slowly by talking to them in a calm voice and refraining from scolding them.