

# Volunteer Probation Officers in Japan —Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Rehabilitation



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# Overview of the Volunteer Probation Officer System of Japan

- Volunteers involved in offenders' rehabilitation activities in the community (Commissioned by the Minister of Justice)
  - Approx. 48,000 volunteers nationwide
  - Organize VPOs' associations based on districts (886 districts nationwide)
  - Involved in probation/parole supervision, coordination of living conditions of inmates, crime prevention activities in collaboration with probation officers
- ➔ ○ No salary provided (reimbursement of travel expenditures etc. are paid)
- Term of Office; two years (re-appointment possible)



# A Case Study: A youth who rehabilitated from delinquency



President of Noda District VPOs' Association  
Kimiko IINO



# Kimiko Iino

**President ,  
Noda District VPOs' Association  
(Chiba Prefecture)**



Former elementary school teacher. Retired after serving as the principal of Kimagase Elementary School. Appointed as a VPO in 2004. Since then, she has engaged in community supervision of numerous adults and juvenile probationers and parolees. In 2011, she served as a member of the committee for the improvement of the VPO system established by the Ministry of Justice. Since 2015, she has been the president of the VPOs' Association of Noda District



## Profile of the Juvenile

- Yuuta (a pseudonym) 16 years old
- He lives with his parents, elder sister and younger sister (five family members)

○When he was a junior high school student:  
Started engaging in delinquent acts such as fighting with his friends, shoplifting, etc.



# When he was on probation for the first time:

The first offence: motorcycle theft, drove without a driving license



Family Court Disposition: juvenile probation



His probation started and Mrs. lino was assigned to supervise him. He worked hard as a construction worker. He visited Mrs. lino's house 2 times a month for regular interviews with her.

- ▪ ▪ However, Mrs. lino worried about Yuuta's character because he was short tempered.

# He was sent to juvenile training school after committing a second offence

The second offence:

Yuuta injured a juvenile (the accomplice of the first offence) older than him. (Yuuta was angered by the older juvenile's provocative attitude when he was waiting for Yuuta to come to a convenience store)



Yuuta was committed to **a juvenile training school** (a correctional institute) by the family court



Mrs. Iino was continuously assigned to coordinate Yuuta's living conditions while he was in juvenile training school



# “Coordination of Living Conditions” while Yuuta was in Juvenile Training School

To coordinate Yuuta’s living conditions, Mrs. Iino:

- \* visited Yuuta’s family regularly and talked with his parents
- \* visited an elementary school that Yuuta graduated from, met the principal and Yuuta’s school teacher and learned information about Yuuta
- \* exchanged letters frequently with Yuuta while he was in juvenile training school
- \* visited Yuuta’s former employer, asking that Yuuta be rehired after his release from Juvenile Training School

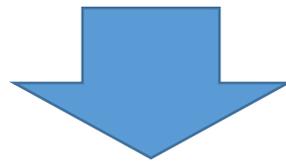


After spending one year in juvenile training school, Yuuta was provisionally released from juvenile training school



# Parole supervision after being provisionally released from juvenile training school

- \* He worked diligently at a company where he used to work before being sent to juvenile training school
- \* He never missed his appointment with the VPO
- \* He paid compensation to the victim for bodily injury



Termination of parole supervision



# Summary of the Case :

## Advantages of individual casework by volunteer probation officers

### Local Character

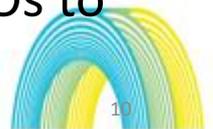
VPOs communicate with offenders as neighbors living in the same community. VPOs have easy access to the offenders' families. VPOs have abundant information on social resources, including potential employers.

### Casework based on personal interaction

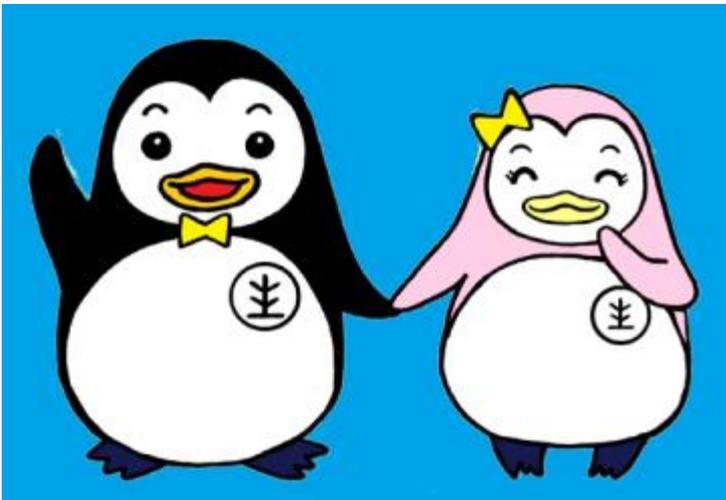
As fellow citizens, VPOs demonstrate purely fraternal concern about the welfare of the probationers. Continuous interactions (in this case, the VPO corresponded continuously while the juvenile was in an institution) build trust between the VPO and the probationer. Accordingly, they feel compassion for each other, and the offenders do not want to disappoint their VPOs.

### Continuous Support

When the probation period expires, the official relationship between the VPO and the probationer ends. However, their relationship as neighbors continues, and just like this case, some ex-probationers visit their VPOs to show that they are rehabilitated.



# Crime Prevention Activities rooted in the Community by Volunteer Probation Officers' Associations



September 14, 2017

President, Ibaraki Prefectural Federation of  
Volunteer Probation Officers' Associations

Mitsuru IINO



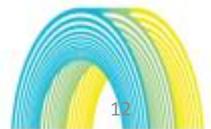
# Mitsuru IINO

President,

## Ibaraki Prefectural Federation of Volunteer Probation Officers' Associations



Mr. Iino was appointed as a volunteer probation officer in 1985 when he worked at Canon Inc. Since then, he has engaged in community supervision of numerous adult and juvenile probationers and parolees while he worked as a business person. He began serving as the president of the VPOs' association of the Ryugasaki probation district in 2006, and since 2015, he has been serving as the president of the Ibaraki Prefectural VPOs' Association. His leadership has contributed to the development of various VPO activities at the Offender Rehabilitation Support Centers in the prefecture.



# Overview of Ryugasaki District

## Volunteer Probation Officers' Association

➤ Organized by 39 Volunteer Probation Officers (VPOs) based in Ryugasaki City, Ushiku City, Kawachi Town (The population of this area is 170 thousand)

➤ Since 2012, the Association has operated an **Offenders Rehabilitation Support Center**. The center is located in a building attached to the Ryugasaki city hall. The center consists of an office, a space to interview probationers/parolees and a meeting room.

No rent is required (the VPO association only pays the utility costs)

The center is the base for the activities of the VPOs association,

 and it is also a symbol of the municipal government's support for VPOs' activities.



# Function of the Offenders Rehabilitation Center: Assisting VPOs' Casework for Probationers/Parolees

- VPOs can meet with probationers/parolees at the center
- VPOs can meet and consult each other about supervision of and guidance for probationers/parolee
- VPOs can meet with other related organizations at the center

Experienced VPOs are stationed at the center everyday, so that they can give advice to other VPOs about guidance for probationers/parolees



# Function of Offenders Rehabilitation Center:

## Assisting Parents of Juvenile Probationers and Parolees

- Holds seminars on parenting skills for parents of juvenile probationers and parolees
- A specialist on parenting skills offers practical instruction on how to listen to their children and how to express parents' feelings to their children. The seminar also includes a group work session for the parents to talk to each other about their difficulties in coping with their children's delinquencies.



# Function of Offenders Rehabilitation Centers: Assisting the Activities of VPOs

- The center holds a seminar named “Hidamari-juku (Sunny Place Seminar)” four times a year.
- Newly appointed VPOs (less than six years’ experience as a VPO — which includes 40 percent of the VPOs of Ryugasaki district) can attend this seminar and have group sessions with retired VPOs to receive advice, so that they can reduce uneasiness in coping with probationers/parolees.



# Crime Prevention Activities Rooted in the Community

## ➤ “Greeting Campaign”

Two times a month, the VPOs’ association, in collaboration with the Women’s Association of Rehabilitation Aid, stands on the streets in the morning to greet and engage in small talk with children on their way to school

## ➤ Patrolling the Streets

In collaboration with youth consultation volunteers, members of the VPOs’ Association patrol the streets in the evening and encourage loitering juveniles to go home



# Crime Prevention Activities rooted in the Community

- Public awareness activities as part of the “Movement towards a Brighter Society”



# Collaboration with Schools

- The VPOs' association has close relationships with local schools and holds “delinquency prevention seminars” for school students and assists the school teachers in supervising their students.
- VPOs hold drug use prevention seminars for school students
- The VPOs' association holds joint seminars with junior high school teachers



# Assistance to “Muryo-juku” and “Children’s Canteen”: Supporting At-Risk Youth

- Assists the activities of “Muryo-juku (free tutoring)” and the “Children’s Canteen” operated by a local non-profit organization
- Muryo-juku and the Children’s Canteen provide free tutoring and free meals to elementary school children or junior high school students of low-income households. 50 children receive support there.



## Other Support by VPOs and the Women's Association for Rehabilitation Aid (WARA) for At-Risk Youth

- Connect “Muryo-juku” and the “Children’s Canteen” with the local schools
- Ask for contribution of text books, stationary and clothing (school uniforms and sports wear) from local residents and contribute them to “Muryo-juku” and the “Children’s Canteen”
- Enhance the community’s awareness of crime and delinquency issues by various awareness-raising activities and supporting community fairs
- VPOs who are former teachers serve as tutors at “Muryo-juku”



# Impact of Support for At-Risk Youth by VPOs and the Women's Association for Rehabilitation Aid (WARA)

- Progress of children who attended “Muryo-juku” and the “Children’s Canteen”
  - ✓ Recovered self-esteem and overcame powerlessness
  - ✓ Those who weren’t interested in going to high school changed their mind and prepared for high school entrance exams
  - ✓ Some stopped shoplifting



# Benefits of the VPOs' Association's Crime Prevention Activities

## **Activities based on probation case work experience**

VPOs can make use of their knowledge and experience of supervising and giving guidance to probationers/parolees when implementing crime prevention activities.

## **Focuses on promoting community factors effective in preventing crimes**

Rather than targeting the reasons for crime, VPOs focus on promoting community factors which is thought to be effective in preventing crimes (For instance, encouraging communications and reducing indifference in the community by the “greeting campaign”, reducing risk factors for delinquency by “Muryo-juku”, “Children’s Canteen”)

## **Enhancing public awareness in supporting offenders' rehabilitation**

Focuses on campaigns which deepen understanding of the community about rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and highlights the importance of receive offenders as members of the community



# Conclusion

Objectives and Contents	Activities of VPOs /VPOs' associations
1. Crime prevention activities aimed at all residents in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Movement towards a Brighter Society" campaign (PR activities to raise public awareness)</li> <li>▪ "Greeting Campaigns"</li> </ul>
2. Early identification of and intervention for at-risk youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaboration with Schools (Drug-use prevention seminars, cooperation with junior high school teachers)</li> <li>▪ Patrolling the streets</li> <li>▪ Support for "Muryo-juku (Free tutoring)" and the "Children's canteen"</li> </ul>
3. Intensive supervision and guidance of offenders and delinquent juveniles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Probation, Coordination of Living Conditions (Continuous relationship as a neighbor even after expiration of the probation term)</li> <li>▪ Seminars on parenting skills</li> </ul>

Know-how and network gained in each activity will be utilized in other activities

VPOs/VPOs' associations involved in offenders' rehabilitation activities in a diverse and general approach, and contribute to creating a safe and secure society. The Offenders Rehabilitation Center is the base of such activities and plays a pivotal role.

