

Workplace Personal Assistance System for Persons with Disabilities in Japan: An Analysis of the Policy-Making Process

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Introduction

- **Barrier to employment:** In Japan, people with **severe disabilities** who need **personal assistance** face barriers to employment.
- **Policy gap:** The Visiting Care System does not cover **working or commuting** hours, making it difficult to maintain jobs.
- In 2020, the government introduced the **Special Program for Employment Support** for Persons with Severe Disabilities, which funds personal assistance for work and commuting.
- **Yet, uptake is low:** 226 users nationwide, and only 102 municipalities implemented it.

Research Questions

1. Why does the *Visiting Care System* exclude working and commuting time?
2. Why is the *Special Employment Support Program* used by so few people?

Methods

Document analysis of policy discussions and reports from key government bodies:

- *Labour Policy Council (2018~2020)*
- *Social Security Council (2018~2021)*
- *Study Group on Coordination between Employment and Welfare Policies for Persons with Disabilities (2020~2022)*

Council Discussions and Key Ideas

Consensus The importance has been recognized by both sides.

1. There is need for Workplace Personal Assistance to **support employment**.
2. **Seamless coordination** between employment system and welfare systems is important.
3. Urgent action required due to growing **public attention**.



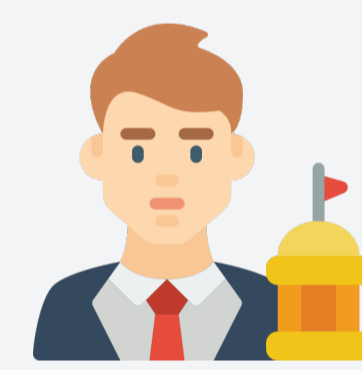
Representatives' opinions



Abolish work restrictions in the current Visiting Care System.

1. Many want to work but cannot under current restrictions, forcing reliance on welfare.
2. Seamless Personal Assistance could reduce **welfare dependence, enhances social participation and tax contribution**.
3. In the long run, society and public finances would benefit.

Policy Makers' concern



Advocate a new system providing workplace personal assistance through shared responsibilities.

1. Unclear division of **responsibility** between departments.
2. Employers must ensure **reasonable accommodation**.
3. Legitimacy of **public funds** for personal paid work questioned.
4. Fear of **budget burden** and long-term financial sustainability issues.

Difficulties Under the Special Program

1. **Non-mandatory implementation:** Local governments can decide whether to adopt the program → limited coverage.
2. **Complex management:** Two separate organizations oversee it → time-consuming and burdensome application process.

Type of Assistance	Policy Area	Application	Funding Source
Personal Care-related Assistance (eg. Toileting)	Employment policy	User applies to local government	50% national, 25% prefecture, 25% municipality
Work-related Assistance (eg. Copying, typing)	Welfare policy	Employer applies to JEED*	Funded by disability employment levy
Commuting	Mixed system	User applies to JEED* (first 3 months), then local government	Shared as above

* JEED = Japan Organization for Employment of the Elderly, Persons with Disabilities and Job Seekers

Conclusion and Outlook

1. The program was a **breakthrough**, allowing people with severe disabilities to receive personal assistance at work.
2. Yet, **fragmented management** and its **separation** from the Visiting Care System limit its use.
3. Further reform requires deeper discussion of **remaining issues** in the council.
4. **International comparisons** offer valuable insights for improvement.