

The 1st Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meeting in FY 2017

[Minutes]

Date & Time: Thursday, October 26, 2017, 7:00 p.m.—8:45 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 603, 6th Floor, Main Building, Yao City Hall

Council Members in Attendance (titles omitted): NONAKA Mônica, KAWAMOTO Yolanda, ZU Yan Ting, PARK Koon-ae, LE THI KIEU Nga, YOSHIMURA Miki, PARK Yanghaeng, HUYNH TU VAN, FUJITO Satomi

Representative of the Relevant Division/Department : Mr. FUKUSHIMA (Vice Director and Manager, Health Promotion Division of the Department of Healthy Community Development)

Secretariat Representatives (Cultural and International Affairs Division): Mr. MURAKAMI (Director of the Department of Human Rights, Culture, & Friendship), Mr. KAMATA (Manager), Mr. KAWAZOE (Assistant Manager), Mr. NISHINO

1. Opening

2. Letter of Appointment Presentation

3. Self-Introductions by Council Members

4. Selection of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Council Member Ms. Mônica Nonaka was selected as chairperson, and Council Member Mr. Yanghaeng Park was chosen as vice chairperson.

5. Disclosure of the Council Meetings

It was agreed that the Foreign Residents' Council meetings would in principle be open to the public.

6. Yao City's Measures for Foreign Residents

A secretary explained the Yao City Basic Guidelines on Internationalization Promotion, the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society, and the other major projects implemented by the city. The secretary also reported the opinions given at the Second Yao City Foreign Residents' Council Meeting in FY 2016.

7. Meeting Procedure

The Foreign Residents' Council Meetings will be held biannually.

Participants will exchange opinions on the progress of the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society, and on the other projects implemented by the city.

8. Progress of the Yao City Plan to Promote a Multicultural Society in FY 2016

The project self-evaluation standards that are to be followed by a division in charge have been modified. Unlike the previous evaluation approach, which simply measured “how much progress the Plan has made,” the new approach would focus on determining “how well each project conducted in a particular year deals with foreign residents.”

Fundamental Objectives 1 and 2 were explained. (Specific examples of projects were provided.)

Opinions were exchanged.

Opinions from the Council Members

- Despite the change in the self-evaluation standards of a division in charge, it is very doubtful that a self-evaluation approach that simply examines the extent to which a project deals with foreign residents will be appropriate. It should be better that we evaluate how much a project is understood by foreign residents and the other people involved, and that we look more at project content.
- The initial objectives of the Plan should be made more visible. It is impossible to properly assess a project just by seeing whether or not it deals with foreign residents. It must be more important to pay attention to people’s reactions generated through a project.
- It is hard to come up with an appropriate evaluation method; I have said in previous meetings that we can have the evaluation data that are easy to see if we just examine whether or not a project broadly deals with foreign residents. This new evaluation system presented by the Secretariat is much clearer if we look at it as a way of classification, not as a method of evaluation.
- I think it is necessary to consider to what extent all the projects, which come in various types, should be analyzed and evaluated.

The standards for self-evaluation will be reconsidered by Secretariat staff members, and a revised set of standards will be prepared by them by the next meeting.

9. Exchange of Opinions (on Healthcare & Medical Services for Foreign Residents)

[Multilingual Translations of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook and Some Other Materials]

The Health Promotion Division has created multilingual versions of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook (MCHH), an information booklet on vaccination procedures, and a vaccination preliminary questionnaire. The translated versions of these materials are handed out to those who are in need of them (upon request) at the Yao City Health Center. Other projects are also made possible thanks to the support that each of our members provides for foreign residents on an everyday basis. We would like to thank all our members for their efforts.

Opinions from the Council Members

- Although the MCHH is translated into nine languages, only a few foreign residents possess the translated versions of the handbook. Isn’t it because most foreign residents do not even know such versions of the handbook exist?

- I work as an interpreter, yet I have never heard that translated versions of the MCHH are available. As far as I know, even foreign residents who do not understand Japanese take home the Japanese version. Something should be done to have that Information shared more widely.
- How about creating a new section on the Pregnancy Notification Form where foreign residents can indicate the language help they need?

Health Promotion Division

- Even if a foreign resident does not understand Japanese, the Japanese version of the MCHH is usually given to them if they have someone who can read and understand Japanese in their family. Medical facilities tend to supply foreign residents with the Japanese version since they believe that that version is easier to comprehend.
- The Health Center believes that the MCHH should be hand-delivered to a foreign resident only after they are interviewed by a public health nurse and a midwife to have their situation and mental state examined. From this point forward, we will think about how the translated versions of the MCHH and the other materials can be more widely known, and will strive to find ways to provide them more effectively.

[Medical Interpretation]

The need for medical interpreters is now increasing nationwide, and there are various programs to train them. Since it sometimes requires the use of medical terms, medical interpretation is regarded as one of those interpretation areas that require some special professional understanding. However, some communities use nonprofessional volunteers for medical interpretation services.

Opinions from the Council Members

- I have experienced working as a medical interpreter several times, and I remember it was difficult to translate the name of the disease a patient had and explain to the doctor what had caused their condition.
- It is best if a foreign patient has access to an interpreter who possesses special knowledge, yet in reality, it is often the case that foreign patients are accompanied by a friend who speaks a little Japanese.
- It should not be a big problem when medical interpreters translate for their family members, but they often cannot avoid being too subjective when working as an interpreter for strangers.
- There is no standard for medical interpretation. It is not necessarily true that someone who speaks both Japanese and their native language fluently can be a good medical interpreter, in understanding the meaning of every word exchanged before them.
- The technical terms used in the medical and educational fields cannot be clearly understood if they are translated just as they are; it is the job of an interpreter to express them in words that are easy to understand.
- An important issue in medical translation is whether the cost is paid by municipalities or medical institutions.
- Since more and more foreign residents suffer not only from physical diseases but also mental health problems, there would be cases where an interpreter has to be with them for many hours.

- I would like medical institutions to provide medical interpreters with training opportunities to learn about the mental health problems foreign residents suffer from.