

Reports of child abuse top 50,000 in 2010, a record high

Kyodo

Listed child abuse cases hit a record 55,152 in fiscal 2010, rising for 20 straight years since statistics began to be compiled in fiscal 1990, a government survey showed Wednesday.

The figure does not include cases in Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures, as well as Sendai, which failed to gather data after being devastated by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, according to the government.

The figure rose 28.1 percent, or 12,090 cases, from the number of cases logged in fiscal 2009, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry said in a preliminary report.

A ministry official attributed the increase to "growing public awareness," saying more people are reporting possible abuse cases to child consultation centers after a case in Osaka in which a young mother left her two infants to die at home made headlines last year.

By prefecture, Aichi saw the largest percentage increase, with 78 percent, followed by 67 percent in Tochigi and 66 percent in Oita.

The cases include those in which child consultation offices run by prefectural governments, as well as 20 municipal governments, took action such as temporarily taking children into protective custody or visiting families after receiving inquiries or being informed about suspected child abuse.

Meanwhile, an expert panel under the welfare ministry said of the 49 deaths in 47 cases in fiscal 2009, children's consultation offices had some contact with the families concerned in 12 of the cases before the deaths, up 13.6 percentage points from the previous year.

"The data may reflect active involvement by consultation offices in possible abuse cases," said Kwansai Gakuin University professor Jun Saimura, head of the panel.

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