

保 護 司

HOGOSHI

~ Volunteer Probation Officers ~



REHABILITATION BUREAU
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
JAPAN

What's "HOGOSHI"?

HOGOSHI or Volunteer Probation Officers (VPOs) are citizen volunteers who support the rehabilitation of offenders. In Japan, the supervision of probationers and parolees (hereinafter referred to as "offenders") is performed by the professional probation officers (PPOs), and VPOs support the efforts of PPOs by providing offenders with additional supervision and assistance.

The VPO system can be traced back as early as the 1880s. In 1888, the "Shizuoka Prefecture Released Prisoners Protection Company" (private halfway house) was established. It provided a residence for ex-prisoners and appointed about 1,700 volunteer workers throughout the prefecture to support ex-prisoners with counselling and assistance. These great efforts is said to be the precursor of the VPO system.

Thereafter, the "Volunteer Probation Officers Act" was enacted in 1950 and the activities of these volunteers were accepted as a national system, which still continues today.

- Five Keywords on "HOGOSHI" -

1 As a "Supporting Neighbor"

VPOs regularly interview offenders and guide them so that they can keep the conditions of their probation/parole, but this doesn't mean VPOs just "monitor" them. Rather than being representatives of the government, they are "supporting neighbors" or "significant others" . VPOs occasionally invite offenders into their own homes and treat them to meals, attentively listen to their concerns and wishes of daily life, and give guidance, both kind and strict accordingly. Thus, the position of VPOs as "supporting neighbors" enables continuous support for offenders even after the probation/parole period ends.



Interview of VPO

Column: HOGOSHI Badge



This badge is an official badge identifying the status of VPO. VPOs wear this badge when they perform their duties. The current badge is designed with 18 petals of chrysanthemum, a sunflower and the rising sun, which represents dignity of VPO.

Note: Probation/Parole is a system which is central in the rehabilitation of offenders, where providing instruction, supervision, guidance and assistance are the responsibilities of the national government so offenders can become self-reliant and sound members of society.



Dedication and Volunteering

VPOs are commissioned by the Minister of Justice and are given official legal status as part-time government officials based on the Volunteer Probation Officers Act. VPOs serve for two years, however, they can be reappointed repeatedly until they reach their retirement age, which is 76 years old. They are not paid salaries, but the government reimburse all or part of the expenses incurred in discharging their duties, such as transportation and communication expenses. Nevertheless, VPOs with enthusiasm help in taking care of the problems of offenders when in time of need, even during the night or during holidays.

This sincere attitude by VPOs allows many offenders to reestablish self-respect, re-enter the community and live their lives independently without re-offending.

Volunteer Probation Officers Act (1950)

Article 1 The mission of all volunteer probation officers shall be, in the spirit of volunteer social service, to assist persons who have committed crimes and juvenile delinquents to improve and rehabilitate themselves, and to enlighten the public on crime prevention, thereby enhancing the local community and contributing to the welfare of both individuals and the public.

Article 3 Volunteer probation officers shall be delegated by the Minister of Justice from among persons who have all of the qualifications in the following items:

- (i) the person is highly evaluated in terms of character and conduct in the community;
- (ii) the person is enthusiastic and has enough time available to accomplish the necessary duties;
- (iii) the person is financially stable; and
- (iv) the person is healthy and active.



Community-Based

VPOs are not mere supplements or replacements for PPOs. Their strength of being local community members is what is unique to VPOs. That is to say, as a knowledgeable local resident having familiarity, they have the ability to utilize local social resources and related organizations, cooperating with the various individuals involved, all of which contribute to the improved reintegration of offenders.

Specifically VPOs:

- support offenders by sourcing cooperating employers and accompany offenders to job interviews in order to help them gain employment.
- as a close advisor to offenders, recognize their hard work and give positive feedback to them.
- coordinate with families or guardians who has accepted the offender by utilizing the local network they have.

For offenders, the stage of Community-based treatment is the exit point of the criminal justice system, and at the same time the entry point into society. As the start of their new life, VPOs with a strong reputation from the society play an important role as liaisons that connect the offenders to the local community which may exclude them, and give the offender a warm welcome.



Yellow Feather Campaign

~ Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future ~



Advertising Campaign

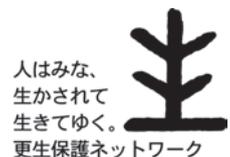
Crime prevention activities are carried out under VPOs' initiative to build a safe and secure society.

Series of the campaigns are conducted in order to foster a general understanding of the importance of offenders' social reintegration and crime prevention.

The “Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future” (Yellow Feather Campaign), a nationwide movement which began in 1951 is organized under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice to promote public understanding of the rehabilitation of offenders. Collaborating with other organizations and volunteer groups, VPOs carry out the campaign through various activities such as advertising campaigns, crime prevention meetings for residents, giving lectures on drug abuse and so on, as well as public relation activities through mass media and SNS. In 2019, 2,969,544 people participated in this campaign.

Column: The symbols and mascots associated with offender rehabilitation

“**生 (Ikiru)**” sign was created in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the offender rehabilitation system in 1999. Using Kanji character “生” meaning “to live” as a motif, this sign expresses an image that people are to live towards the future as if trees' buds grow.



The Yellow Feather of Happiness is used throughout the country as a symbol of amicable cooperation showing endorsement of the “Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future (Yellow Feather Campaign)”.

The Rehabilitation Penguins, **Hogo-Chan and Sarah-Chan**, are helping to promote the campaign. They are gentle penguins who pray for a brighter society free of crime and delinquency, and always watch over those who are trying to rehabilitate themselves.





Offender Rehabilitation Support Centers

The Offender Rehabilitation Support Center was established as a base for VPOs activities. These centers serve as facilities where any VPO activities can be conducted, such as interviews with offenders, VPO training programs, meetings between VPOs and related bodies or even with community citizens and so on. A total of 886 centers have been established nationwide as of 2020.

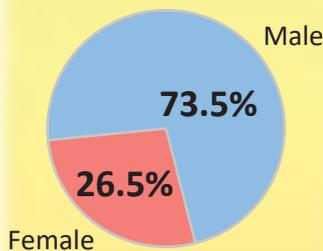
Throughout the country, VPOs organize VPO associations and have offender rehabilitation support center in each area.



Case Conference

Basic Data of "HOGOSHI"

1. Gender



2. Numbers

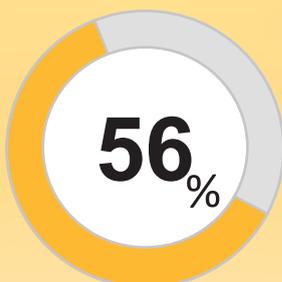


3. Age

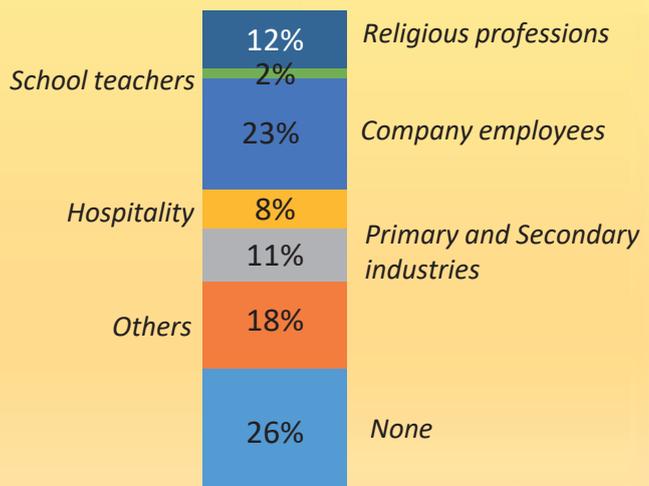


4. Serving years

More than half of all VPOs have been serving for more than eight years.



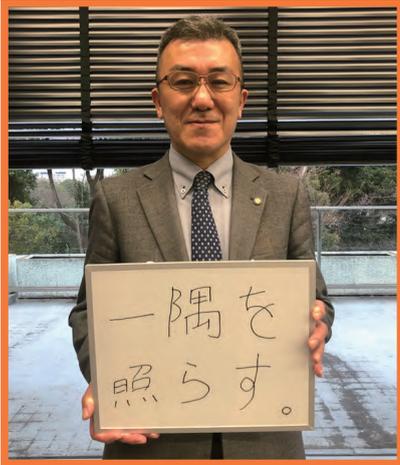
5. Occupation



(2020.1.1)

-Messages from “HOGOSHI”-

VPOs are working to help offenders rehabilitate themselves to create a safe and secure community. The following are some examples of the mottos they always keep in mind as “HOGOSHI”.



“Lightening up a corner”

I would like to guide offenders to the path to rehabilitation into the society by accepting them as a neighbor. Each VPO is one light, but if we all come together as one, we can form to be a “formidable light” that can help to build a bright future.

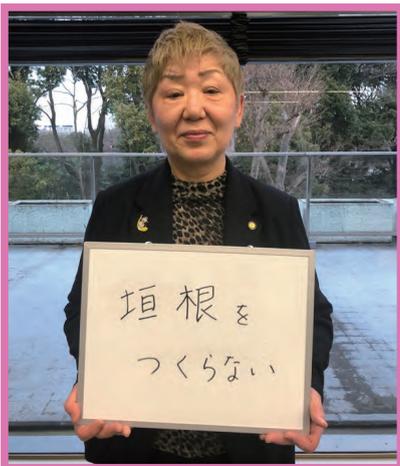
“Making an effort with continuous self-development from here on out.”

VPOs support offenders’ rehabilitation and provide volunteer work for local communities in order to build a society where everybody can live in safety. Therefore, continuous self-development is essential for our activities.



“Accepting others without prejudice”

Regardless of who it is, I always try to accept the person as they are in a respectful manner and with open arms. It is my belief that “we are all human.”



The Volunteer Probation Officer (HOGOSHI) system in Japan and the significance of Community Volunteers for community-based work internationally.

Stephen Pitts

Ambassador – Confederation of European Probation (CEP)
Consultant in Community-based Justice



The Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO) system in Japan is remarkable in its scale and range of duties. It has been, and continues to be, an inspiration to probation and correctional services in Asia and beyond.

The reasons are not difficult to understand. VPOs in Japan are integral to the work of the probation services. Their central role is well-established; the first VPO Act stems from 1950 and addresses many aspects of the VPO system including volunteer qualifications and appointment. Although they volunteer time, experience and expertise, VPOs have the status of part-time national government officials (including compensation for injury). Among other distinguishing features are their extent of duties and presence throughout the country. The Act allows for the appointment of 52,500 VPOs, a number which means they frequently offer the core and critical contact with justice-involved individuals in all but more serious cases.

VPOs are supported in their work by local and national Associations, and are further guided and supported by formal arrangements with professional Probation Officers. Increasingly they have access to “Offender Rehabilitation Support Centres” . VPOs also promote system sustainability by encouraging other suitable volunteers. Furthermore, the VPO system is complemented by other important volunteer organisations including the Women’s Associations for Rehabilitation Aid and Big Brothers and Sisters Association.

About 22,000 “Cooperating Employers” provide further important community support.

The VPO system undoubtedly provides an exceptional example of community engagement in community-based justice work. Volunteers, working with people who may have complex backgrounds and needs, demonstrate the care of society, a belief that change is possible, and encourage optimism about an individual’s future. They also offer practical guidance and support in overcoming barriers to reintegration. As established members of the community, VPOs are well-placed to “demystify” probation practice and to encourage communities to accept and actively support reintegration. All are practices that evidence tells us are often central to an individual’s successful integration and desistance.

Internationally too, volunteers contribute a wide range of important roles, including work with higher risk persons (for example Circles of Support and Accountability which originated in Canada) or extending the “reach” of probation work with specific groups or in more remote areas. Whatever their precise role, volunteers, as so well-exemplified by the VPO system, give practical expression to the Tokyo Rules’ encouragement of public participation in community-based work and to the unquestionable value of embedding probation work closely in the communities they serve.

We have uploaded some short movies on “HOGOSHI” to the Ministry of Justice channel!



I used to be a delinquent penguin, and I did many bad things.



But thanks to my Volunteer Probation Officer (“HOGOSHI”), Mr. Whale, and



My “Cooperating Employer”, Mr. Seal...



I’m now a “rehabilitated penguin!”

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Cover picture : “The Great Wave” by Katsushika Hokusai
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