



# **Comprehensive Study on Network Development of Working Life Supports for People with Disabilities through Community Collaboration between Employment and Medical Fields**

**[Research Report No. 84] Summary**

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### **Coauthors (in order of writing)**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Tamaki Sato:      | Supervising Researcher, Social Support Department, National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation |
| Haruna Yuichiro:  | Researcher, Social Support Department, National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation             |
| Katsuo Taya:      | Senior Researcher, Social Support Department, National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation      |
| Noriko Uchikoba:  | Researcher, Social Support Department, National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation             |
| Hirokazu Mishima: | Researcher, Social Support Department, National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation             |

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### **Purpose of the study**

In the midst of rapid advances in medical treatment technologies, one major challenge to be addressed in vocational rehabilitation toward a universal society is helping patients with intractable diseases, higher brain function disabilities, mental disorders or similar disabilities to participate and be retained in the labor market

In such a situation, neither the medical sector nor the employment sector has sufficient knowledge, experience or know-how regarding employment support for persons needing ongoing medical treatment to join or return to the labor market. Moreover, there is little collaboration of the two sectors for employment support.

This study therefore, by implementation and assessments of research model program, aimed to empirically determine the framework and methodology for social support models by collaboration of concerned organizations, in which the experts in the fields of medical, health and welfare (hereafter "medical and health fields") continuously work to improve and maintain the basic abilities required for the labor market, while the employment experts simultaneously coordinate the accommodations in workplaces and communities, and vocational rehabilitation according to individual needs.

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### **Research period**

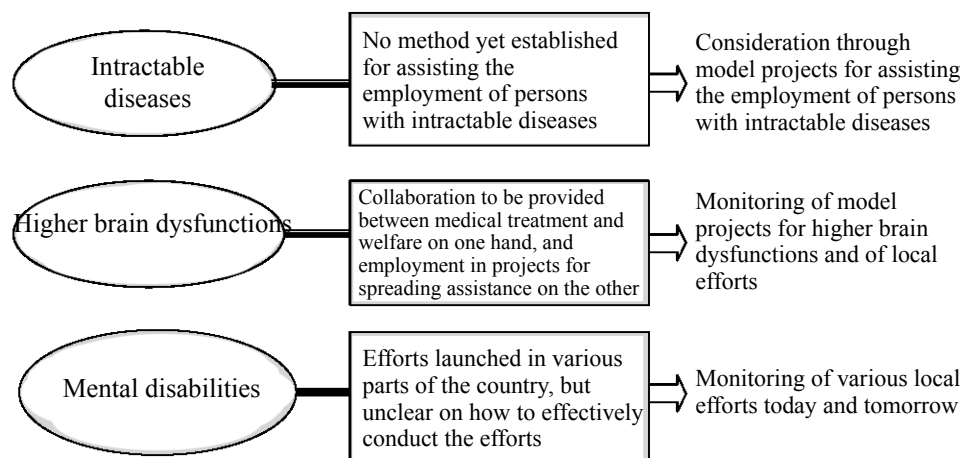
Fiscal 2005 to 2007

## Contents of the research

### ■ Background of the study

With increasing diversity of in disability employment measure and the development of measures to assist persons with disabilities including the Law for Helping Persons with Disabilities to Become Independent, it is necessary to respond appropriately to the needs of persons with intractable diseases, higher brain dysfunctions or mental disorders, and similar people "wanting to work," and develop collaboration of employment, medical and other sectors for that purpose.

- A closer look at the situation of each disability reveals the following:
  - (1) For persons with intractable diseases, medical assistance and other assistance in welfare and other aspects of life in general are being stepped up with nationwide centers set up for consultation and assistance for intractable diseases, but how to proceed with work support remains a challenge to be addressed.
  - (2) For higher brain dysfunctions, the "Model Program for Assisting Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" (2001-05) and "Program for Spreading the Assistance for Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" (2006 and onwards) initiated by the Japanese government are taking measures in the medical and health fields, but collaboration with employment-assisting establishments remains a challenge to be addressed.
  - (3) For mental disorders, programs have been enriched at a considerable rate in each field (medical treatment, welfare and employment) in recent years, with care management, ACT and similar efforts being initiated, but the networking of measures in these respective fields remains a practical challenge to be addressed.
- A growing number of medical institutions and those for similar purposes (e.g., health centers, welfare facilities, mental health and welfare centers, centers for consultation and assistance for persons with intractable diseases) are doing work supports with lack of sufficient know-how and are struggling with trial and error. Such institutions also do not collaborate sufficiently with employment sectors.
- Under these circumstances, this study is intended to establish a method of making new efforts toward employment assistance for persons with intractable diseases, and promote collaboration with the medical treatment, welfare and employment sectors as pertaining to higher brain dysfunctions. To that end, a decision has been made to launch respective employment-assisting model projects and conduct a survey of prior cases in order to proceed with initial and ongoing employment, and consider how such assistance should be provided and how related organizations should collaborate in the future.

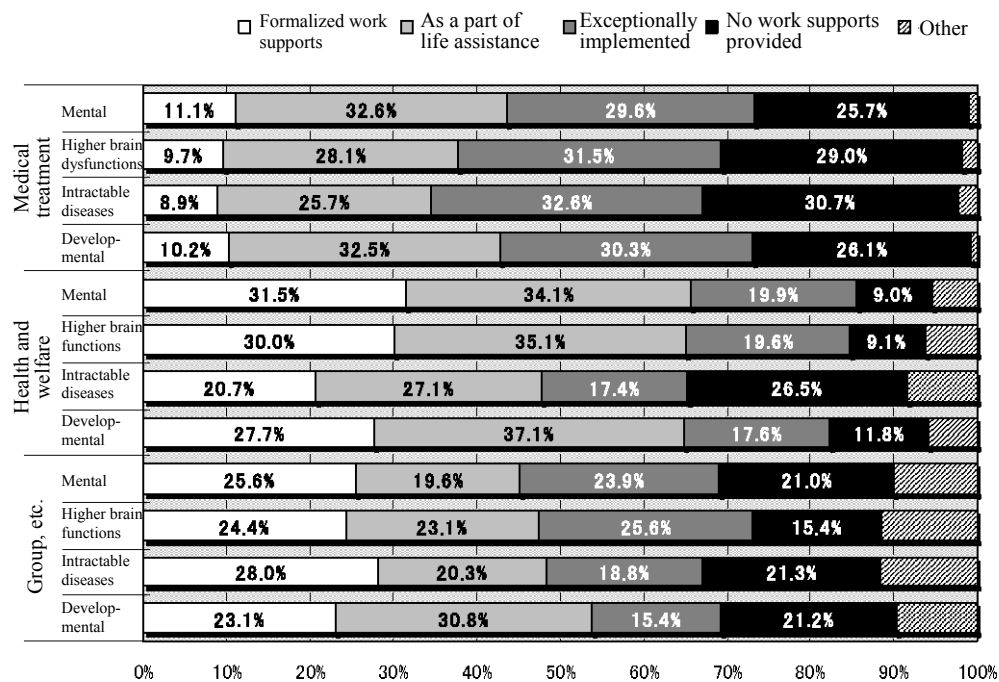


**Fig. 1 Challenges to be addressed toward implementing this study**

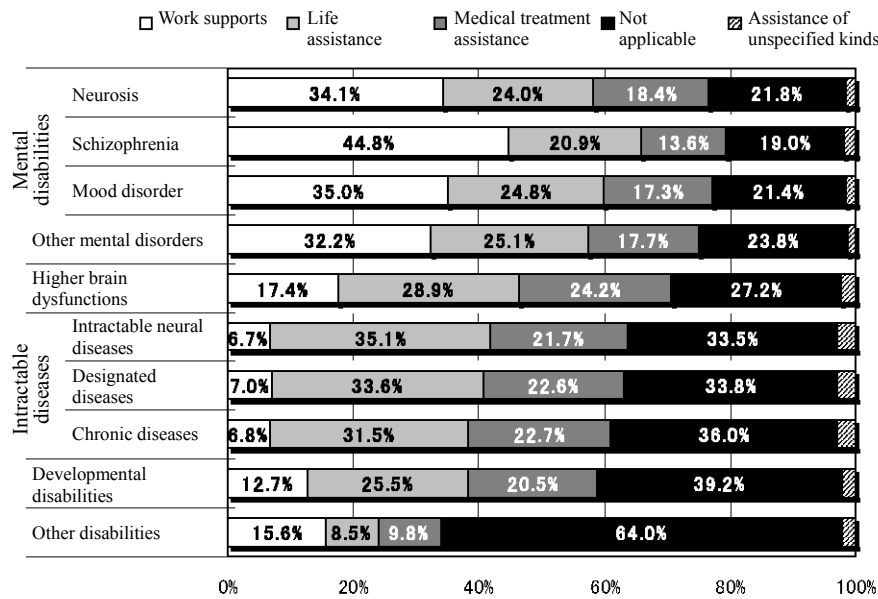
## ■ Situation of work supports in medical and similar fields

This study involved a "survey of challenges of community organizations in supporting working life of people needing ongoing medical care" conducted on 2,328 organizations and institutions in the medical and health fields nationwide. The survey revealed that each organization provides work supports as complemented part of life support and considers it an important challenge, but faces many challenges to address in proceeding with work support.

- The work supports offered by medical treatment and similar establishments are considered to "make the lives of users more worthwhile and improve the quality of life (QOL)" and "ensure sufficient income and for related purposes." Consultation and assistance for employment and returning to work are considered as important as assistance that supports life in general, but there are limitations on assistance in job-hunting for individuals and assistance in contact with employers. Expectations therefore run high for collaboration with employment sectors.
- One consideration to be noted when medical or similar organizations proceed with work supports is the unclear positioning of tasks concerning work supports in the organizations and insufficient know-how and expertise.
- Another consideration is how people should be aware of the employment of persons with disabilities. The awareness of employment possibilities of each user is related to the behavior of various organizations in work supports. The more the organizations have a understanding of "they can work despite my disease or disability" and "labor abilities do not correlate with my bodily and intellectual abilities", the more varied, and the more active strategy for employment assistance can be promoted.



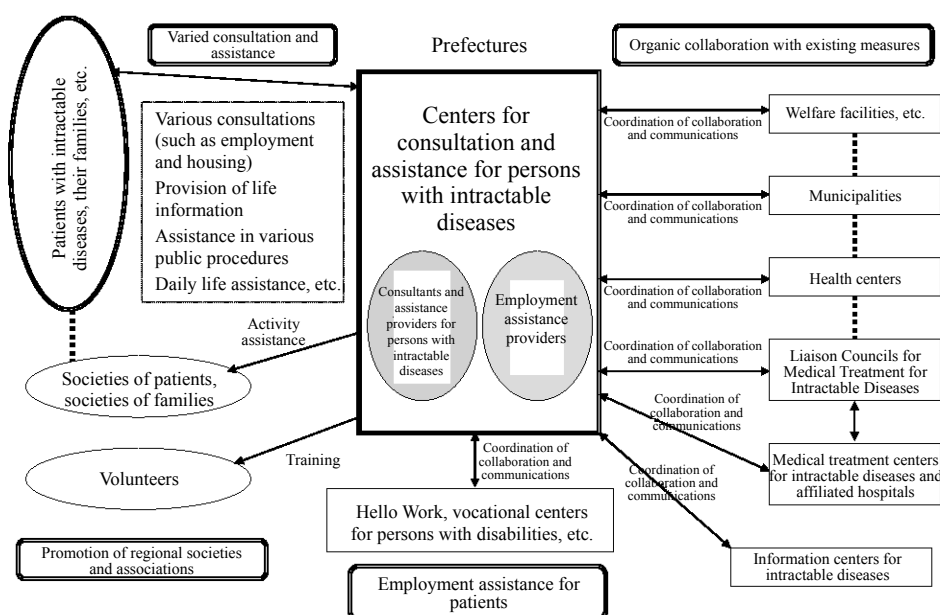
**Fig. 2 Positioning of work supports tasks at medical and other organizations**



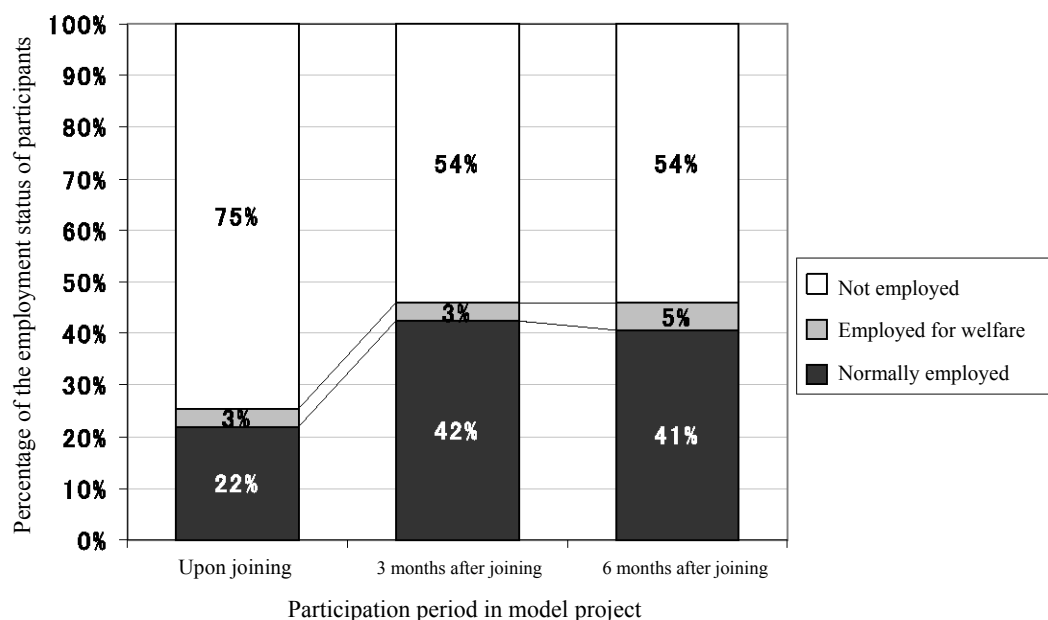
**Fig. 3 Implementation status of work supports at medical and other organizations**

- A new model work support program to tackle the diversity and complexity of intractable diseases  
As for the social supports for persons with intractable diseases, work supports had regrettably no prior cases. Therefore, we implemented the "Model Project for Assisting the Employment of Persons with Intractable Diseases." In the projects, the following was conducted. Work support model was proposed and conducted according to the work support needs of the persons. In order to determine the challenges in promoting work supports and collaborative roles of related organizations, three centers (in Hokkaido, Saga and Okinawa) for consultation and assistance for intractable diseases were designated as affiliated institutions and a work supporter was assigned to each institution. The work supports employment were provided by "customized employment" as a new set of support know-how with assistances from the Research Department of the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation. Also building of a system of collaboration with related local organizations was attempted.
- The Model Work Support Project for Persons with Intractable Diseases was implemented for one year from November 2006. Supports were respectively given to 19 persons ("customized employment type"), 22 persons ("the original work supports at each center type"), and 18 persons ("brokering and referring to HelloWork type") for a total of 59 persons.
- A new set of supports of the "customized employment type" has achieved the following effects:
  - (1) Hidden wish for work was discovered out of persons seemingly lacking any hope of getting a job, and the work supporters have come to understand the dreams and job-related wishes of persons with intractable diseases.
  - (2) The work supports provided by the centers for consultation and assistance for persons with intractable diseases has dramatically raised the interest of local communities in assisting the employment of persons with intractable diseases and collaboration of related organizations.
- Still, other challenges remain. Regarding job-hunting in "customized employment type" assistance, the burden on the centers for consultation and assistance for persons with intractable diseases was too heavy to handle alone. It was hoped that further efforts would be made through collaboration involving HelloWork and other employment sectors. (The collaborations with HelloWork and other employment sectors still differ in progress in the three regions.) One challenge related to the

characteristics of intractable diseases was the need to cope with cases where the clients hesitate to disclose details of their disease to employers, and cases where people were obliged to quit employment or be sustained from work supports due to a worsening bodily condition or hospitalization.



**Fig. 4 Collaboration model for work supports in this study**  
(based on partial modification of a document issued by the Disease Control Section, Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare)

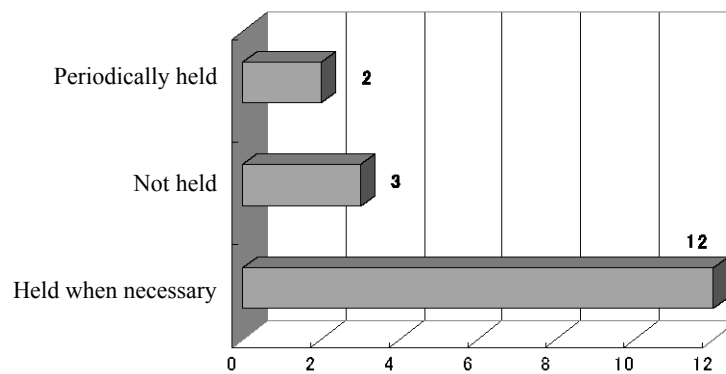


**Fig. 5 Changes in employment status of all participants (n = 59)**  
**in the work support model project**

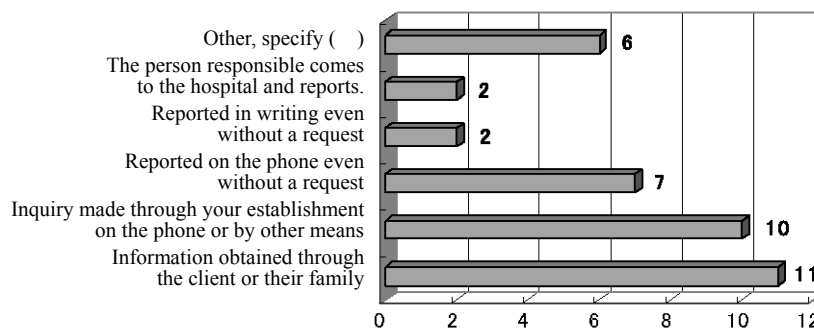
- Collaboration between medical treatment and employment-assisting establishments in helping to employ persons with higher brain dysfunctions

Now that such measures to assist the medical treatment and welfare fields in communities as the "Program for Spreading the Assistance of Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" are spreading to different regions, one challenge to be addressed is how to collaborate with employment-assisting establishments. The way these establishments should collaborate must be considered. To that end, the Chiba Rehabilitation Center (hereafter "Chiba Rehab") — the assistance-providing program center in Chiba prefecture — was regarded as an affiliated establishment and staffed with employment-related consultants and assistance providers. In collaboration with the Chiba Vocational Center for Persons with Disabilities (hereafter "the Chiba Center") and the Vocational Center of the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation (hereafter "the Vocational Center"), the "Model Program for Assisting the Employment of Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" designed to provide assistance was launched. At the same time, the monitoring of assistance status and the related challenges in other regions were also considered.

- The Model Program for Assisting the Employment of Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions was implemented for one year from May 2006. Seven persons with higher brain dysfunction subject to ongoing medical measures at Chiba Rehab and wishing to obtain employment assistance were given consultation by consultants/assistance providers and coordinated in employment assistance by the Chiba Center and the Vocational Center, and six of them obtained jobs.
- Through this Model Program for Employment Assistance, the following challenges were considered: (1) significance of sharing information and how it should be transmitted (importance of know-how in providing information from medical treatment establishments to employment-assisting establishments and that of reverse feedback), (2) challenges to be addressed in the future by medical treatment establishments (preparing assistance in prospects for employment and promoting an understanding of the client's disabilities based on employment scenes), (3) challenges to be considered together with medical treatment and employment-assisting establishments (sharing ideas beyond field borders and adopting flexible concepts regarding other than ordinary normal employment).
- Concerning the collaboration of medical treatment and employment-assisting establishments, a questionnaire survey and a hearing conducted to monitor the status of things in communities nationwide revealed the following:
  - (1) For medical treatment establishments that confirmed "not providing employment assistance" for persons with higher brain dysfunctions, positive effects are seen through ongoing efforts since the "Model Program for Assisting Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" and "Program for Spreading the Assistance for Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions" were launched; and
  - (2) For medical treatment establishments that had long been "providing employment assistance," many establishments were playing a central role in the community as the center of the "Program for Spreading the Assistance for Persons with Higher Brain Dysfunctions," but few actively collaborated with local vocational rehabilitation centers and Hello Work offices, thereby clarifying certain challenges to be addressed in terms of the collaboration system, method, standards for requesting employment assistance, and feedback of information from employment-assisting establishments.



**Fig. 6 How joint case conferences are convened with regional centers of medical treatment establishments that provide employment assistance**



**Fig. 7 Feedback status of information from regional centers of medical treatment establishments that provide employment assistance**

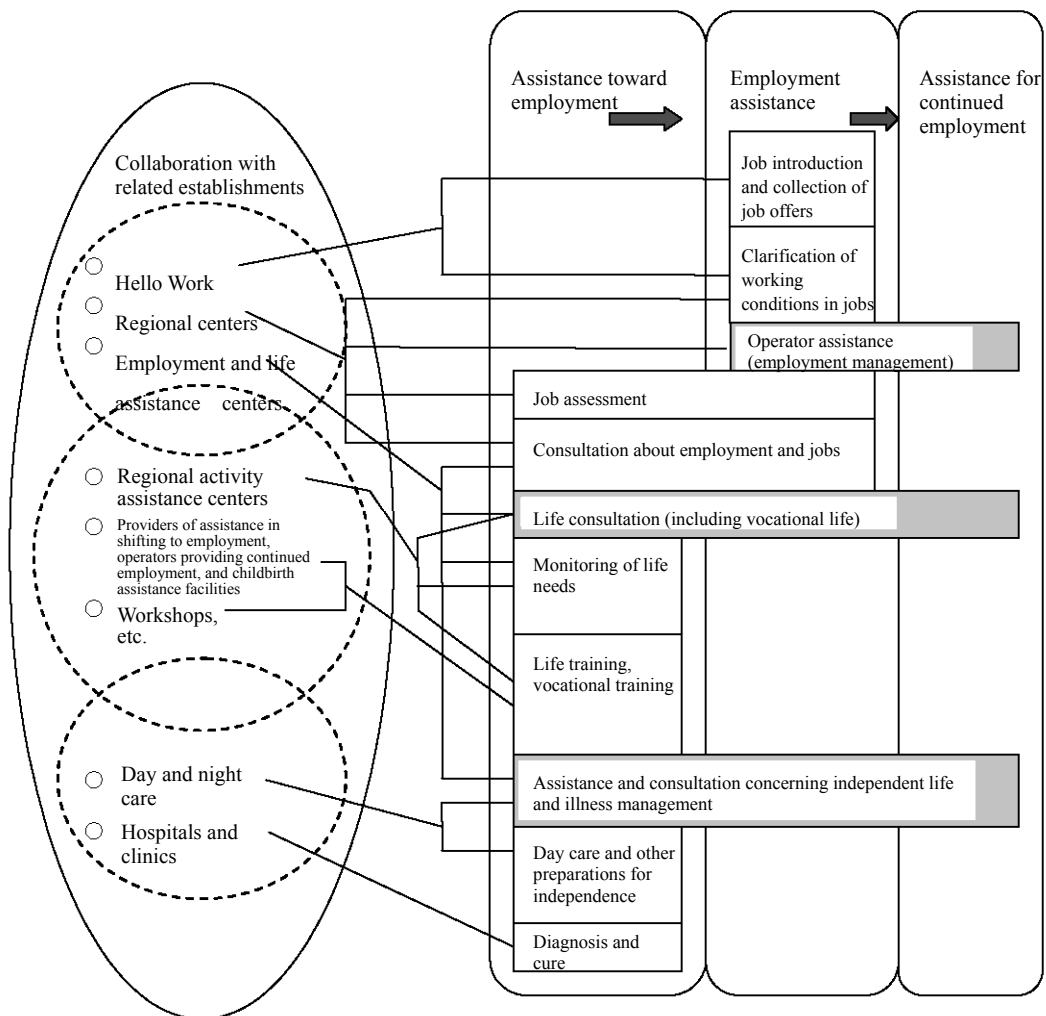
#### ■ Helping to employ and keep employed persons with mental disabilities

The independence and social participation of persons with mental disabilities has now become a major issue, with a new set of efforts being initiated in various fields of assisting establishments involved in medical treatment, welfare and employment, together with private companies. It is important to make this kind of assistance based on a horizontally linked network. Therefore, the coauthors studied "how effectively to proceed with employment assistance at medical treatment and other establishments" through a hearing of medical treatment establishments, and "determine the assistance needs of business places and clients and how to provide the assistance required of related establishments to enable employment and continued employment."

- A hearing was conducted for six medical treatment establishments providing systematic employment assistance for persons with mental disabilities. As a result, the coauthors identified (1) the category of establishments providing independent assistance including employment assistance through day care and other services as internal efforts, and (2) the category of establishments stepping up their collaboration with related regional establishments through collaboration with the functions of such external establishments as childbirth assistance facilities and regional life assistance centers. It was also demonstrated that the important key to making these respective activities more effective was determining which specialists were in charge of the central role in PSW and other operations, and taking an active approach to employment-assisting establishments.



- A hearing was conducted for five business places hiring persons with mental disabilities. As a result, it was first confirmed that the conventional employment guidance and job introduction at Hello Work, and the job coach assistance provided by local vocational rehabilitation centers are indeed effective. In addition to these "establishments for assistance provided after the client seeks a job," it was also demonstrated that demand is growing for establishments in charge of life assistance ("establishments for assistance to be provided even before the client seeks a job") to intervene in a complex manner. It was also revealed that these are necessary to ensure continued assistance after the client is hired. The coauthors then considered it necessary to build a consistent assistance system not only of "assistance toward employment" and "employment assistance," but also "assistance for continued employment."

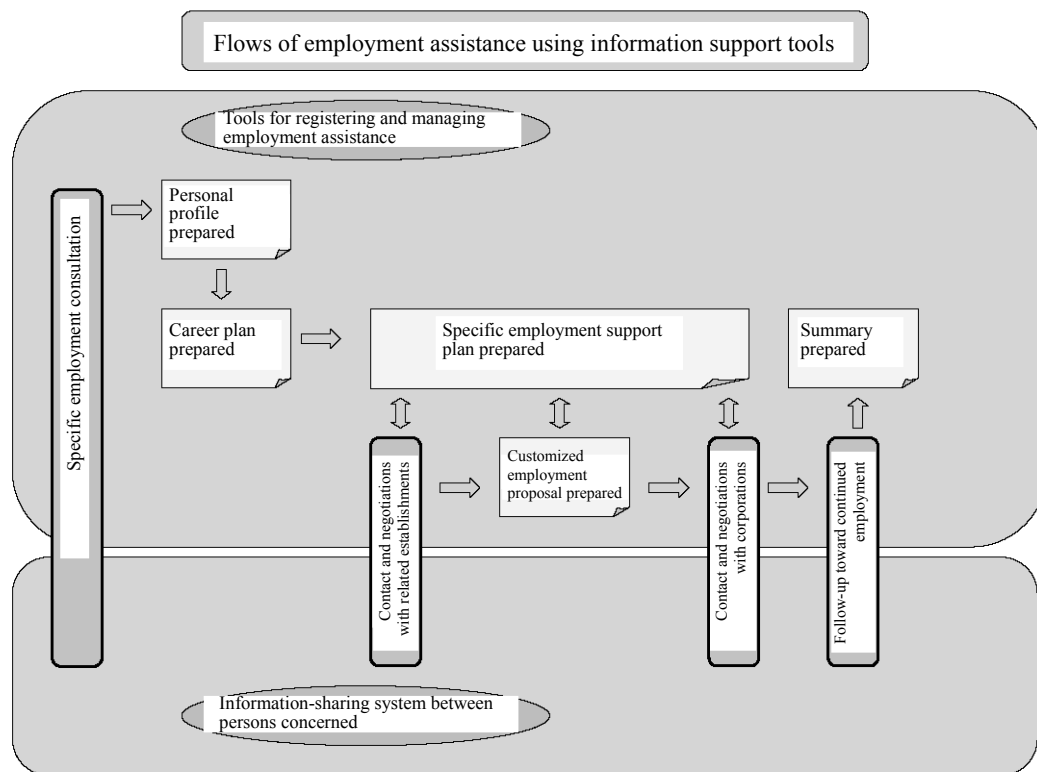


**Fig. 8 Collaboration required of related establishments in medical treatment, welfare and employment assistance**

■ Development of information support tools useful to a support network of medical treatment, welfare and labor

There is high demand for consultation and assistance including employment issues in the fields of medical treatment and welfare. It is becoming indispensable to provide a support network between these establishments, and Hello Work, local vocational centers for persons with disabilities and similar establishments on the other. To arrange a foundation for smoothly promoting such a network under these circumstances, the coauthors developed information support tools (a specific information management program) that matches tasks, integrates the management of medical treatment cases, welfare and other areas, and collects diverse information. These tools were used and validated in the "Model Program for Assisting the Employment of Persons with Intractable Diseases" to make it useful to related regional establishments.

- Information support tools were based on the "customized employment model," which is based on "WorkNET" developed by the Research Department of the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation. The goals were to: (1) determine specific and concrete "challenges" according to the disability status of job seekers and users, and their vocational targets, (2) make it easy for related establishments and centers to "make plans" and "form a consensus" according to the situation of individuals upon their consent, and (3) realize a means of "support implementation and follow-up" and the effective implementation of "assessment and review" and related operations.
- The functions and specifications of information support tools were supposed to ensure that entering data on information forms would fulfill the "information database" functions for assisting both individuals and establishments, while enabling the preparation, printing and other output of documents that promote employment assistance in the form of a "personal profile," "career plan," "customized employment proposal," "specific employment support plan" and other forms of employment assistance. The tools were also supposed to be usable in such scenes as consultation with clients, sharing and transmitting information with related establishments, and for operators considering employment.
- Information support tools were actually used and validated by establishments implementing the "Model Program for Assisting the Employment of Persons with Intractable Diseases" and have just obtained a certain assessment as practical information tools. The coauthors then indicated their intention to make certain corrections to meet the requests raised (such as adding items of information as basic information and modifying information about diseases/disabilities and items of environmental arrangement), thereby perfecting the tools and making them useful to related establishments wishing to use such tools.



**Fig. 9 Flows of employment support using information support tools**

■ Expectations for collaboration in employment support

Never has there been a time when the need for "collaboration" and "networking" has been as emphasized as it is today. It is now important to collaborate with the fields of employment, medical treatment and other areas. This study has revealed many valuable scenes of collaboration under way. Behind a few "systematic scenes of collaboration," there are always many "beginnings of collaboration." It is important to make much of such beginnings, and then systematize and position them in the system. The coauthors hope that the hints and directions revealed in this study will be used to promote future measures to be taken in various regions.