

Child care seekers exceed spots in Tokyo ^[1]

Author: The Japan News

Source: The Japan News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 27 Apr 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The number of children whose parents or guardians want to enroll them in certified nurseries, including municipal nursery facilities and “nintei kodomoen,” which integrate the functions of kindergartens and nursery schools, in Tokyo’s 23 wards for fiscal 2016 exceeded the admission capacity by about 22,000 children in the first round of applications, The Yomiuri Shimbun has learned. The number of applicants is 1.52 times the capacity.

If parents cannot enroll their children after the initial round of applications, they have to apply for a second or later one, choose uncertified nursery facilities, or extend their child-care leave. The survey result indicates that the government’s measures for children on waiting lists do not meet the needs of child-raising families.

Central govt needs to respond

The Yomiuri Shimbun surveyed the number of applicants aged from 0 to 5 by age, and the admission capacity in Tokyo’s 23 wards by questionnaire beginning on March 14. There was a total of 65,063 applications for the 42,897 total places.

By age, the number of applications for 1-year-old children was the largest with 25,672 in total. The number of applications for children aged 4 and 5 did not exceed the capacity.

There were 1,182 children on waiting lists last year in Setagaya Ward, the largest figure of any municipality across the nation for the third consecutive year. The number of applicants this year exceeded the capacity by 3,157 in the first round of applications.

The Setagaya Ward government increased its nursery placement capacity by 1,250 children to 15,925 from the previous year by measures such as opening new nursery facilities. The ward government provides rent subsidies to private operators to secure sites for nursery centers, and also makes efforts to secure nursery workers by hiring them from rural areas and giving them rent subsidies. However, the ward official in charge said, “The ward cannot handle the situation on its own, and it won’t be solved unless the central government becomes serious.”

Ward govts’ efforts

In Meguro Ward, the ratio of applications for children up to the age of 5 to the admission capacity grew to over 200 percent. A project to build two new nursery facilities was opposed by local residents in two districts. Though one is set to open this June — more than a year behind schedule — there is no prospect for the other one.

The ward government paid attention to utilization of public land. New nursery facilities are scheduled to open in April next year in what is now the ward office’s parking area and classrooms at unused middle and primary schools.

In Katsushika Ward, the capacity to accept babies less than a year old exceeded the number of applicants. There is increasing number of households moving into the ward with small children. The ward has a plan to increase the admission quota by 1,245 from fiscal 2015 through fiscal 2017 by setting up more nursery schools.

Minato Ward is experiencing sharp growth in population. Though the ratio of applications for 1-year-olds to the admission capacity is 2.78-to-1, it has been operating 12 “urgent provisional nursery facilities” for the last 10 years, utilizing unused primary schools and other places.

As these facilities are not treated as certified nursery schools, the questionnaire survey did not cover them. However, the ward government said that the total capacity including such facilities meets the needs of ward residents.

The Edogawa Ward government has a unique measure called “Hoiku Mama” (Child-care mothers). Under the system, women with a lot of experience in raising children take care of infants under 1 year old. The system is not registered as a certified child-care service.

There are about 200 Hoiku Mamas under the system, and each one looks after one or two infants. As the system is not counted in the total capacity, the capacity to accept babies under 1 year old appears to be less than 40 percent of the number of applicants. An official of the

ward said: "The Hoiku Mama measure partly covers the shortage of nursery workers. The system contributes to a substantial sufficiency."

Goal: 40,000 more spots

The Tokyo metropolitan government has set a goal of increasing the capacity of nursery services by 40,000 more children by the end of fiscal 2017 as its long-term vision. The metropolitan government plans to consider raising the target based on the number of children on waiting lists as of this April.

"The issue of children on waiting lists is a peculiar problem to large cities where there are also such problems as child-raising generations becoming concentrated and easily isolated from the community," said Prof. Junko Hamaguchi of Ochanomizu University, who specializes in early childhood education. Hamaguchi added: "As the major premise, the central and local governments are required to take drastic measures to secure sites and child care workers. It is also effective to support nonprofit organizations that work on community relations."

-reprinted from The Japan News

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: spaces ^[4]

availability ^[5]

access ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/05/child-care-seekers-exceed-spots-tokyo>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/05/child-care-seekers-exceed-spots-tokyo> [2] <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002839722> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/international> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/availability> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/access>