

The 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Virtual Exhibition Materials

Overview of BBS in Japan



Japan Federation of Big Brothers and Sisters

3F Rehabilitation Aid Center
5-10-9 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0051
<http://bbs-japan.org>

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※For examples of specific BBS activities, please refer to the supplementary materials showcasing our work.

1 BBS in Japan

■ About BBS

The Big Brothers and Sisters (BBS) originated as a movement in the United States, as outlined below.

■ BBS in Japan

In Japan, BBS is a youth volunteer movement that seeks to create a brighter society, free from crime and misconduct, by eliminating juvenile delinquency and the hardships afflicting young people. BBS works on the principle of 'fostering mutual learning by engaging with juveniles (defined by Japan's Juvenile Law as persons under 20 years of age) at their own level in a spirit of volunteerism and friendship'.

■ Features of BBS in Japan

Although similar initiatives exist overseas, the beneficiaries and methods of support vary by country. The most distinctive feature of the BBS movement in Japan is its history of working alongside the Ministry of Justice, forming part of the private-public collaboration that characterizes Japan's unique offender rehabilitation system. In this position, BBS has joined with probation offices and private volunteers in the community, including volunteer probation officers and Women's Associations for Rehabilitation Aid, to support the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents.

■ Activities rooted in local communities

Local BBS associations throughout Japan plan, coordinate and implement activity programs in their respective communities. Run entirely by volunteers, these associations continue to build on over seventy years of BBS knowledge and experience. Their activities are carried out with the close collaboration and support of probation offices and other related organizations, including local governments and welfare/educational institutions.

■ Changes in delinquency

In recent years, juvenile delinquency in Japan has continued to decline (see Fig.1). Delinquent behavior is also shifting away from group rebellion against adults and society, towards more marginalized, asocial conduct that is less publicly visible.

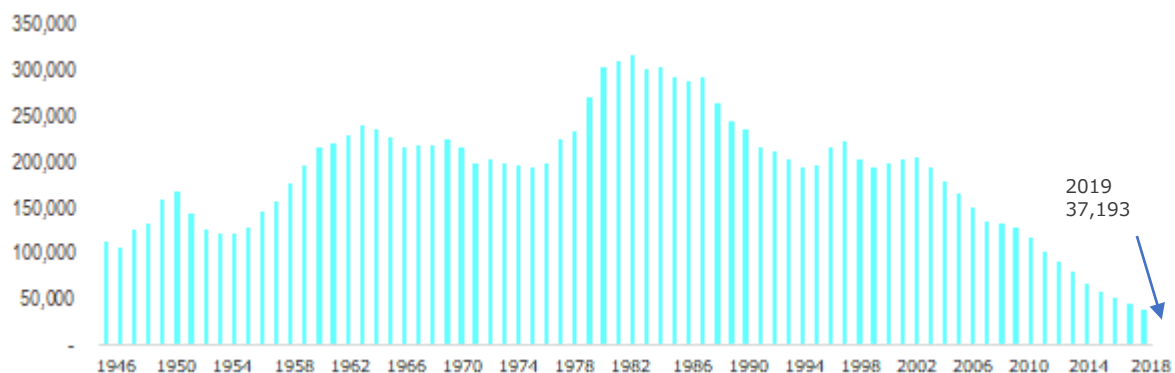


Fig.1 Number of juvenile arrests

Source: White Paper on Crime 2020 – Number of juvenile arrests (Penal Code offenses, dangerous driving causing death or injury, and negligent driving offenses causing death or injury)

■ Challenges facing modern society

Despite Japan's economic progress, a significant number of juveniles still turn to delinquency, feel isolated from society, or suffer daily hardships. The presence of youth who experience poverty, bullying, or abuse from parents and others, refuse to attend school or drop out altogether, or even engage in self-harm, is a major problem for modern Japanese society. Such young people lack a sense of self-esteem and self-worth, which makes it difficult for them to trust others and find their place in the world. The current pandemic has also restricted access to support, meaning that youth in struggling households do not receive adequate care.

■ What BBS aims to achieve

Besides supporting juveniles who face such hardships or delinquency, BBS seeks to turn social exclusion and discrimination into inclusion and tolerance by approaching these problems from the perspective of the young people they affect. BBS adopts this mindset in its youth development and delinquency prevention activities.

2 History of BBS in Japan

■ Roots of Japan's BBS movement

The roots of BBS in Japan trace back to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BB/BS) movements in America, which are said to have begun under Ernest K. Coulter in 1904. The arrival of his ideas in Japan can be seen in a 1913 article by the Young Men's Christian Association that features the first translation of 'Big Brother'.

■ Birth of the BBS organization

Although this spurred similar activities to sprout up around Japan, an organized movement did not arise until 1946, when university students in Kyoto learned about efforts to prevent delinquency among WWII orphans. Deeply moved by the plight of young children turning to delinquency within the ruined fabric of society, the students appealed to Kyoto's prefectural government, stressing the need for juvenile delinquents to engage with peers, close in age and social standing, who could serve as sound role models for leading a proper civil life. Backed by the head of the Kyoto juvenile court (now commissioner of the Kyoto Family Court), this appeal became a catalyst. On 22 February 1947, the inaugural meeting of the Kyoto Student Association for the Protection of Juveniles was held at what is now Kyoto Women's University. From there, the BBS movement spread, leading to the establishment in 1950 of the National Council of BBS Associations, which was renamed in 1952 as the Japan Federation of Big Brothers and Sisters.

■ The movement's basic principles

In 1957, BBS members adopted a charter that pledged to: 1. Engage closely with juvenile delinquents, in friendship and sound character; 2. Commit to self-reflection and self-improvement; and 3. Contribute to building a brighter society. Then in 1967, the federation also established the 'Basic Principles of the BBS Movement', which prescribed the three areas of BBS activities: Tomodachi (Friendship) Activities, Delinquency Prevention Activities, and Self-Improvement Activities.

■ And today

As the movement celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1997, the basic principles were revised to reflect changing social conditions. BBS activities now target not only juvenile delinquents but also socially maladjusted youth. In 2016, the federation became a non-profit organization, and this year will mark the 75th anniversary of its formation.

3 Structure of BBS in Japan

In Japan, BBS is organized around local associations, of which more than 300 exist nationwide. Operating at the level of administrative districts (cities, towns, etc.) or institutions such as universities, their various activities are rooted in local communities. Some 5,000 members belong to these associations; currently, more than half are students. The proportion of student members is rising each year, reaching 54 percent in 2020.

These local BBS associations are overseen and coordinated by 50 prefectural associations, corresponding to the probation offices in their respective prefectures (with 4 associations in Hokkaido). In addition, prefectural BBS associations are organized into eight regional associations under regional parole boards throughout Japan. Their duties include regional-level training. Finally, at the national level the Japan Federation of Big Brothers and Sisters serves to promote the entire movement through PR activities, coordination of the various BBS bodies, and collaboration with related organizations (see Fig.2).

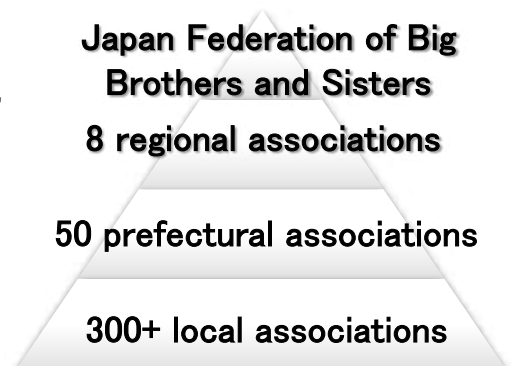


Fig.2 The structure of BBS in Japan

4 BBS in Japan's local communities

To re-establish themselves as a member of society, a juvenile delinquent needs not only a strong will and the encouragement of legal and administrative bodies, but also the understanding and cooperation of their local community.

For this reason, in Japan the public and private sectors work together to provide guidance and support to juveniles on probation, with various 'rehabilitation volunteers' contributing to rehabilitation activities in unique ways (see Fig.3).

- Volunteer Probation Officers
Duties include crime-prevention activities as well as aiding the reform and rehabilitation of offenders. Works in tandem with probation officers to oversee the probation of the juvenile in question.
- Members of Women's Association for Rehabilitation Aid
Provides a female perspective in areas such as youth development and public awareness activities aimed at preventing delinquency. Driven by the desire to ensure that troubled young people do not struggle alone.
- BBS members
Provides support through various activities that draw on the fact that members are of a similar age and can relate to juveniles on their own level. While these activities are carried out independently with the support and cooperation of probation offices, tomodachi (friendship) activities requested by such offices take place under their guidance within the probation framework.

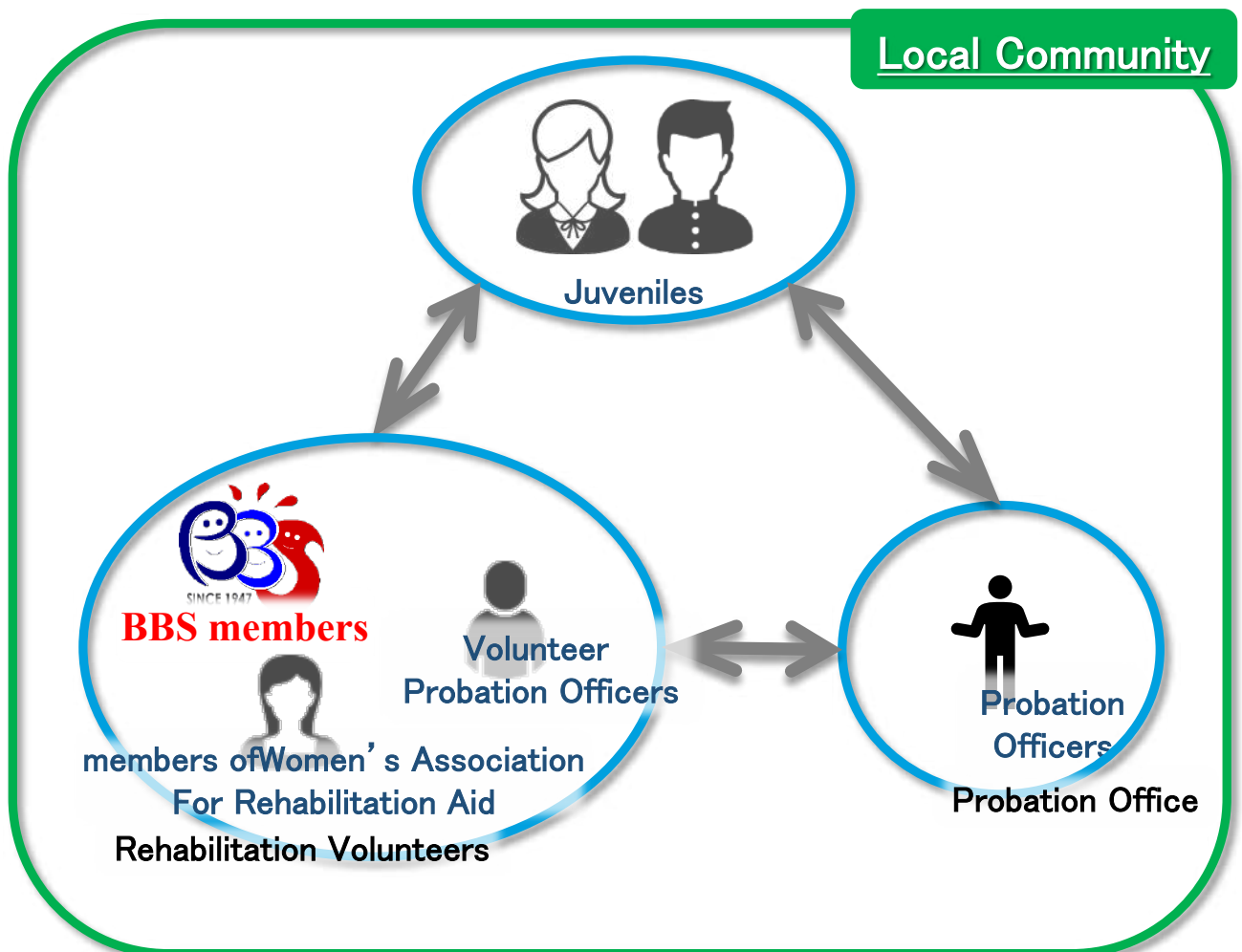


Fig.3 BBS in local communities

5 BBS activities in Japan

(1) Support for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents

① “Tomodachi” (Friendship) Activities

“Tomodachi” activities are the core activities that distinguish BBS in Japan. These ongoing activities involve BBS members forming supportive relationships with juvenile delinquents or disadvantaged youths to assist their rehabilitation.

■ Activity framework

- In most cases, BBS receives a request from a public institution, such as probation office, family court, child guidance center, children’s self-reliance support facility, or school, and carries out activities according to the policies of that institution. If the individual is on probation, this is done under the supervision of a probation officer and volunteer probation officer.
- Requests are also made by guardians or other individuals. In such cases, BBS works in consultation with the requester and, if necessary, seeks specialist advice.
- The juveniles that BBS assists may be delinquents or have circumstances they prefer to keep private. As such, BBS members pledge not to divulge details obtained through their activities, and the organization takes meticulous care in its handling of such information.

■ Process

- Upon receiving a request, BBS members meet with the guardians or juvenile and initiate a relationship once both sides agree to proceed.
- The relationship between a juvenile and BBS member is that of two people who, despite not knowing each other, are bound by a common purpose, as equals. The hope is that members will be able to provide a positive influence more naturally than they would by serving as qualified and authoritative instructors.
- A special feature of these activities is that continued engagement leads to the formation of a relationship similar to the unique bonds of friendship between same-aged peers.
- Unlike a conventional friendship, however, the activities can be brought to an end at the will of the requester. Before doing so, many requesters consult with BBS about the juvenile’s progress or whether ending the relationship is advisable.

■ Format

Although activities generally take place on a one-to-one basis between a BBS member and the juvenile, in special cases multiple members may work with one juvenile, or group work techniques may be employed as necessary.

■ Number of annual cases & results

- Amid a decline in the juvenile population and delinquency, in recent years cases have numbered around 200 nationwide.
- Feedback from requesters indicates positive changes in juveniles, such as appearing happier, speaking more with family, and beginning to consider their future.
- Even juveniles who resist adult guidance appear to embrace the advice of their BBS peers and unconsciously benefit from their positive influence.

Since “tomodachi” activities begin only through outside requests, BBS maintains close links with relevant institutions to ensure they understand the organization’s role. As society has recognized its long-running achievements, BBS has been approached by school counselors and local governments seeking assistance and advice on youth development and measures to prevent reoffending. Being directly involved with youth is also a rewarding experience for members, offering opportunities for personal growth.

② Visiting juvenile training schools and children’s self-reliance support facilities

Upon request, BBS works with youth in juvenile delinquency institutions or other facilities by offering learning support and recreation (see supplementary materials on BBS activities).

(2) Delinquency prevention activities

■ Delinquency prevention activities

BBS works to support the sound development of youth and create a brighter society by reaching out to juveniles and the broader community. This work can be divided into two main areas: (1) activities that encourage the participation of local juveniles, with the aim of youth development and delinquency prevention; and (2) public relations and awareness-raising activities that encourage residents to be involved in improving social conditions and eliminating the causes of delinquency from the community.

■ Youth development and delinquency prevention activities

BBS tailors activities such as learning support, sports, camping, children's groups, and creating afterschool spaces to suit the needs of individual communities. In 2019, the federation recorded 1,343 group activities nationwide, involving 10,961 juveniles and 4,733 BBS members. All such activities are designed to instill confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

■ Activities to eliminate the causes of delinquency from local communities

Together with organizations engaged in rehabilitation or youth development in the community, BBS works to raise awareness and improve harmful environments that foster crime and delinquency (e.g. removing graffiti from public spaces).

■ Main public awareness activities

The Ministry of Justice's "Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future" is a public-private collaboration of local governments, probation offices, and rehabilitation volunteers, including BBS associations. By distributing flyers and holding various lectures and workshops, this initiative aims to deepen citizens' understanding of offender rehabilitation and encourage involvement in building communities free from crime and delinquency.

(3) Self-improvement

- To carry out BBS activities, members must know the reality of juvenile delinquents and the hardships faced by youth, and to learn the interpersonal skills that create a foundation for mutual understanding with young people. To this end, members are committed to self-improvement aimed at building trust with juveniles, including attending lectures given by probation officers and specialists, as well as learning about role-playing and recreation approaches.
- Aside from centralized national-level training jointly organized by the Ministry of Justice and the federation, many training sessions are arranged by regional, prefectural and local associations.
- Although the pandemic has forced most group training sessions to be canceled, the online training begun in many places has gained positive feedback, with members grateful for the chance to participate remotely from distant places and eager to continue the initiative.

6 Sharing the BBS movement with the world

We seize any opportunity to inform the world about BBS activities in Japan and boost international collaboration. The following are recent conferences and other events we have been involved in.

- 3rd World Congress on Probation (2017, Tokyo)
- Japan-China International Youth Exchange (2018, Beijing, etc.)
- Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2019, Bangkok)
- 4th World Congress on Probation (2019, Sydney)
- Kyoto Congress Youth Forum (2021, Kyoto)

Such conferences provide opportunities to learn from others active in the field around the world, to reflect on our activities in Japan, and to share the results with local BBS associations at home, enhancing future community activities.

Seven BBS members participated in the Kyoto Congress Youth Forum, which took place ahead of the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. They engaged in lively discussions with young people from overseas on topics such as the SDGs and 'youth engagement in preventing youth crime and reintegrating youth offenders', which will be a great asset to our activities moving forward.

7 BBS activities amid the pandemic

■ Previous methods and approaches

Given the highly confidential nature of information obtained through “tomodachi” activities and group work with juveniles, as well as the many occasions in which trust is cultivated only because juveniles feel comfortable discussing their personal troubles face-to-face, BBS has placed great importance on in-person activities. To date, nearly all of the organization’s activities have taken this form, including many that are only possible directly or in groups, such as sports and camping.

■ Challenges amid the pandemic

Amid restrictions on in-person activities during the pandemic, BBS has been exploring online alternatives instead of opting to cease activities altogether. In doing so, the following challenges have emerged:

- ① Fixed notions, both inside and outside BBS associations, that face-to-face works best
- ② Requester concerns about personal information leakage
- ③ Lack of IT literacy among members
- ④ Lack of understanding and support from partner organizations, etc.

■ Efforts to overcome these challenges

To overcome the abovementioned challenges and remain active during the pandemic, BBS is undertaking the following:

- ① Establish rules for online activities
- ② Trial online regular meetings, general meetings, study sessions, PR materials, etc.
- ③ Establish rules for in-person activities (conditions for face-to-face activities, incl. rules for temperature checks and disinfecting; responses in the event of an outbreak, etc.)
- ④ Trial group work with limited participants to see what is possible in person
- ⑤ Promote mutual understanding through training activities with related organizations (volunteer probation officer associations), including lectures and discussions







■ Examples of activities

- ① Online learning support for juveniles not attending school
Learning support has been effective despite being held online rather than in person as before (for details, refer to supplementary materials showcasing examples of BBS activities).
- ② Online group work
Although BBS had previously not conducted group work online, given the ongoing pandemic we worked with probation offices to carefully weigh the challenges of working online against the prospect of ceasing activities altogether. After clarifying the relevant rules, we decided in favor of online work. Drawing on experience participating in online classes and events during the pandemic, we arranged competitions for games that could be run virtually, such as sugoroku and charades.
- ③ Postal learning support for juveniles residing in children’s self-reliance support facilities
We offered support by sending printed copies of questions and response sheets to facilities on weekends, then grading and commenting on work sent by the juveniles before returning these at the start of each week.

8 BBS activities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As outlined below, the BBS movement’s vision of creating ‘a brighter society, free from crime and misconduct, by eliminating juvenile delinquency and the hardships afflicting young people’ aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals that have been set as a global target for 2030.

With these goals in mind, we will continue striving towards a sustainable society that leaves no one behind.

BBS Activities	SDGs
<p><u>Friendship activities</u> Helping juvenile delinquents reintegrate into society by forming supportive relationships.</p>	
<p><u>Learning support</u> Working to boost the basic academic ability and communication skills of juvenile delinquents.</p>	
<p><u>Recreation</u> Giving juvenile delinquents the opportunity to relieve stress, have fun, and feel connected to society through sports and other activities.</p>	
<p><u>Providing meals for youth in relative poverty</u> Amid growing relative poverty, sharing meals with juveniles provides enjoyment, reassurance, and social connection.</p>	
<p><u>PR & public awareness activities</u> Educating the public to create brighter, safer, more secure communities without crime or delinquency, where no one is left behind.</p>	
<p><u>Presenting at international conferences</u> Showcasing the role of youth volunteers in supporting the social reintegration of juvenile delinquents, and proposing solutions for other countries.</p>	

BBS Japan Pledge

The 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Kyoto Congress) & Youth Forum

Continuing to offer support throughout the pandemic

In the midst of a global pandemic, we have gathered here in Kyoto. Japan's BBS movement began with Kyoto University students amid the turbulent period of postwar reconstruction. They were moved by the plight of youths during this difficult time. More than 70 years on, social conditions are drastically different amid today's pandemic. Yet there are still young people who suffer hardship and need support.

These "hottokenai" juveniles cannot be left to struggle alone. BBS strives to aid these youths who live with difficulties such as poverty, bullying and abuse in addition to delinquency. They are our peers. This is precisely why we want to grow together to lead the next generation.

The continuing spread of COVID-19 hinders direct person-to-person interaction. Nevertheless, we are working to overcome these conditions by embracing the recent rapid developments in information and communications technology. No situation will prevent us from providing support.

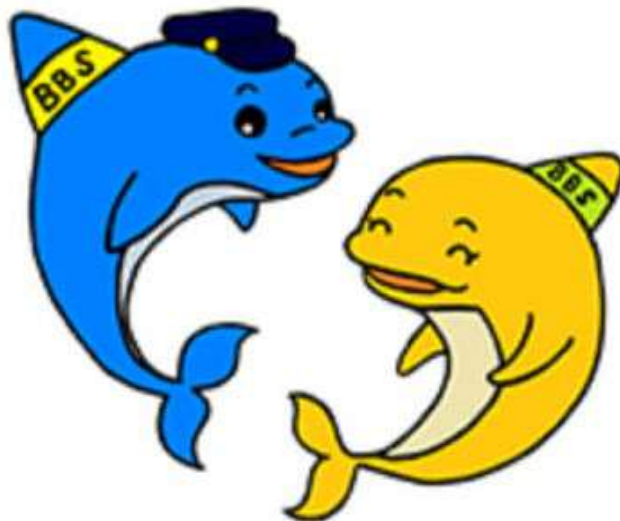
Our preparation for this Congress and participation in the Youth Forum have also given us the reassurance that there are like-minded people all over the world. We are all similarly driven to think, discuss and act to ensure that "hottokenai" troubled juveniles do not struggle alone.

We hereby pledge to build on the valuable connections and inspiration gained here. We will work with like-minded individuals to build a brighter society that leaves no one behind.

7 March 2021
Japan Federation of Big Brothers and Sisters

The 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Virtual Exhibition Supplementary Materials

Examples of BBS Activities in Japan



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(About the cover illustration)

In order to raise public interest and understanding of the seemingly distant rehabilitation system, each related volunteer organization has its own endearing character. BBS uses this pair of dolphins, representing an older brother and sister. Whale and stoat characters are used by volunteer probation officers and the Women’s Association for Rehabilitation Aid respectively, appearing on posters and other promotional materials.

1 Support for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents

Ex.1 “Tomodachi” (friendship) activities (1)

(Report from BBS member in Fukuoka Prefecture)



Subject profile

- 15-year-old girl parolee from a juvenile training school
- Often went out on the town with friends late at night, and was seen as in need of better social relationships.
- Constantly used her smartphone during the day and was often absent from school.

Description of activities

1 Circumstances leading to the start of activities

During an interview with the juvenile and her mother, the girl's probation officer at the time suggested that she should try to develop a positive interpersonal relationship by spending time with a BBS member. With the consent of both the juvenile and her mother, the probation office made a request to the BBS association.

2 Activity plan

Accompanied by a senior colleague, the BBS member initially met with the juvenile and her mother at a nearby café to discuss the activity plan. At the girl's suggestion, it was decided that they would go shopping and chat together; the girl's mother also requested that the juvenile receive support with personal relationships and studies to help her attend school.

Comments from participating BBS member

My impression of the juvenile changed over the course of our activities. At first, she seemed anxious, perhaps due to having just been released from the training school. But after meeting up a few times to go shopping or share a meal, I realized that she was just an ordinary girl who loved to chat. She told me about the things she enjoyed each day, her favorite foods, and even about the cool boys at school.

As our conversations expanded to new topics, she began to confide in me about her deeper concerns. The age difference between us was just right for her to feel that she could open up to me. Even though six years may feel like a considerable age gap in Japan, we could still see each other as part of the same generation. I sensed that she looked up to me as a slightly older sister and a role model.

Being of the same generation as the juveniles, as BBS members we are able to see things from their perspective and to build good relationships. Many juvenile delinquents have trouble communicating with others. The trust that grows between BBS members and juveniles helps them to develop their communication skills, gradually dispelling their sense of loneliness.

In this way, interacting with BBS members seems to make juveniles feel less alone and improves their ability to create bonds with the people around them.

Ex.2 “Tomodachi” (friendship) activities (2) (Report from BBS member in Tokyo)

Subject profile

15-year-old boy parolee from a juvenile training school



Description of activities

1 Circumstances leading to the start of activities

Wishing for her son to go on to high school, the juvenile’s mother requested “tomodachi” activities to support his studies for the entrance exams. The request was made via the probation office, which arranged the first meeting between the juvenile, his mother, the probation officer, and a volunteer probation officer. Despite not appearing very keen on the idea, the boy agreed to take part in “tomodachi” activities.

2 Activities

Initially, I tried to provide learning support as requested by the probation office, but the boy lacked motivation and often did not show up as arranged. Instead, I decided to first build our relationship by doing things that he liked. We played soccer in the park and joined in group activities with other BBS members and volunteer probation officers, which helped him to gradually relax.

After some time, we were meeting with a volunteer probation officer when the boy indicated that he would rather get a job instead of going to high school. The idea was discussed with his mother, probation officer, and a volunteer probation officer, and we reached the conclusion that he would work while also studying via a correspondence course. Given these changes, I worked with the juvenile and the requester to revise the original goal of providing learning support. We agreed that we would use this as an opportunity to jointly explore his options for the future while continuing to build a close relationship.

Eventually, despite some reservations the juvenile decided to keep working and quit his correspondence high school. Setting aside the appropriateness of this decision, I supported his stance because I was pleased to see the boy earnestly thinking about his future, given the previous indifference about his life’s direction.

Within six months, the juvenile had settled into a routine and began to go out with workmates on days off. He had set up a life of his own and no longer needed my involvement as before. For me this was a bittersweet moment, but it seemed that the time had come to think about wrapping up our “tomodachi” activities.

Comments from participating BBS member

During my activities, I was able to receive supervision and to sit in on some of the juvenile’s meetings with his volunteer probation officer, which was very helpful. In particular, when the boy was struggling to decide on his future direction, I wavered too, wondering which option would be best and what support I could offer. At that point, I shared the following with the volunteer probation officer:

“I’ve been asked to provide learning support, but his motivation is weakening. Having received little recognition in his life, he has now found a workplace where he is valued and senior colleagues are eager to show him the ropes. This job seems very important to him because it offers prospects for the future. I’m afraid that forcing him to study as he is gaining independence will not do him good. At some point in his life he may embrace the need to study, or perhaps he never will, but I feel that the choice is his. As part of the wider community outside his work, I see my role now as creating opportunities for us to enjoy these activities together, serving as a window through which he can discover that life has a lot more to offer beyond his current job, and lending an ear in the hope that it helps him to grow by confronting his own feelings and experiences.”

The experienced volunteer probation officer listened sympathetically to what I shared, which allowed me to look back on my relationship with the juvenile, organize my thoughts, and gain confidence in moving forward. This proved a pivotal point in our activities.

Ex.3 Three-way collaborative project (BBS, local government, national employment support center)

(Report from local BBS association in Sapporo)



Hokkaido is home to a state-run facility that offers practical agricultural training as part of the rehabilitation process for juveniles on probation. The local town where the facility resides, strives as a community to aid the recovery of juvenile delinquents. With support from the Ministry of Justice and our federation, the three organizations listed above organized a joint project in the town, planned and run mainly by university student BBS members from around the prefecture. In addition to these Hokkaido-based members, the 4-day, 3-night event encouraged involvement from BBS associations across Japan. Although the project ended after two years in 2019, the BBS association has raised money through crowdfunding and continued to be involved with the juveniles in new ways, such as providing learning support as well as agricultural training.

- Objectives

Promote juvenile rehabilitation, energize the BBS movement and publicize the town's efforts by creating opportunities for BBS members to interact with the facility's juvenile residents through agricultural training and other activities. In doing so, boost public understanding and support for community involvement in rehabilitation.

- Program

Group work focused on sports, including dodgebee and soft volleyball; agricultural training, including shiitake mushroom harvesting; meeting with community members, etc.

- Comments from members and the probation officer

Member 1: I enjoyed the chance to experience new things, like the agricultural training, along with playing sports and talking with the juveniles. The local people explained that, rather than giving them special treatment, they regard the youths as regular townspeople. I realized that this is what community support is all about. This project made me reconsider the idea of rehabilitation, and I realized that true rehabilitation comes not from a structured life in an isolated facility, but from the warmth of human interaction.

Member 2: Hanging out with the youths, I found them all to be gentle at heart, far from the common image of juvenile delinquents. It made those images feel like nothing more than discriminatory labeling, while the true problem is the bad environments that surround these young people. These BBS activities made me eager to reach out to socially-isolated youths and prevent them from going down the wrong path.

Probation officer: Despite the project's short duration, interacting with peers in the same generation greatly energized the juveniles. They seemed to thoroughly enjoy the training and group work, and the chance to share their concerns. For youths who are usually surrounded by adults, this would certainly have been a refreshing and liberating experience. It revealed a side of them that remains hidden when among adults, which underscored the necessity and importance of receiving support from other young people.



Ex.4 Learning support at juvenile training schools

(Report from local BBS association in Kyoto)



Objectives

- Improve students' academic performance.
- Stimulate students through engagement with people outside the facility.
- Alleviate students' anxiety by demonstrating, through the visits of BBS members, that there are people ready to support their rehabilitation.

Activity overview

BBS members participate in training school classes and provide the following learning support:

- Sit with students who struggle to keep up with classwork and explain difficult areas
- Assist students who are studying for high school entrance exams
- Explain difficult areas in the students' self-study



Comments from participating BBS member

In the beginning, both the BBS members and students were nervous, but gradually they began to respond with smiles and actively ask questions when they didn't understand, which was very pleasing to see.

Given the different levels of progress, motivation and aptitude between students, I felt that it is significant for BBS members to assist their studies by participating in classes and tailoring our support to each individual, in the hope that they would begin to enjoy schoolwork.

We will continue to hone our approach to ensure that our learning support is a pleasant and enjoyable experience for students, allowing them to focus on their studies.

Ex.5 Recreation at children's self-reliance support facilities*

(Report from local BBS association in Hiroshima)



Objective

- Improve communication skills and adherence to rules through recreation.

Activity overview

Conduct recreational activities with elementary and junior high school students residing at the facility.

- Organize icebreakers, games, sweets-making activities.
- On the day, juveniles and BBS members enjoy the activities together in groups.
- At Christmas time, BBS members give each student a handmade present.

* Children's self-reliance support facilities are welfare facilities that assist children who are considered at risk of delinquency or who require mentoring due to adverse household environments, etc. Either through admission or visiting arrangements, these children receive the necessary guidance and support to become independent.

Comments from participating BBS member

The children seemed to enjoy their recreation time. Nervousness gradually turned to smiles when talking with BBS members, and they became immersed in the games, even those aimed at slightly younger kids.

According to facility staff, the children had been looking forward to a visit by volunteers as a rare chance to interact with people other than the staff themselves. Especially in the case of an organization like BBS, whose members are mainly university students close to the children's age, hearing our stories and playing together provides positive stimulation. Some of them even became interested in university and began to dream bigger after learning about different professions.

Besides the fun of recreational activities, I hope this involvement with BBS gives the children a good opportunity to think about their lives.



(Trialing recreational activities)
※Juveniles not pictured

2 Delinquency Prevention Activities

(1) Youth development and delinquency prevention activities

Ex.1 “Kodomo Shokudo” (Children’s Cafeteria)

(Report from a school district BBS association in Tokyo)

One in seven Japanese children are said to live in relative poverty. In such households, children often eat alone for reasons such as their parents being at work.

In response to this situation, we set up a reservation-based cafeteria for children from disadvantaged households.

Objectives

- Convey the enjoyment and importance of meals
- Create a place where the children feel that they belong, with BBS members as older brothers and sisters

Activity overview

- Provide a free dinner for the children.
- Play ball games, hide-and-seek, drawing, etc.



(Mealtime at the Children’s Cafeteria)

Comments from participating BBS member

One of the changes we saw in the children was improved communication skills.

Initially, some of the children would only speak among themselves or to particular BBS members, or need a particular member to accompany them. However, after a few visits to the cafeteria the children seem better able to communicate, talking and playing with members and kids they hadn't spoken to before.

After finding out about the generally low academic performance of disadvantaged children, I feel that the next challenge is to help with their studies.

Ex.2 Online learning support for juveniles not attending school

(Report from a school district BBS association in Ibaraki)



At the request of a group of Ibaraki parents whose children do not attend school, since 2020 the prefecture's BBS association has partnered with private volunteer organizations to provide online learning support to 14 students, ranging from elementary to high school.

This project is a collaborative effort between several organizations. Working with the volunteer staff and parents, we search for the best ways to help each juvenile.

After an initial interview with the child and their parents, we tailor our support based on their wishes, using weekly hour-long Zoom meetings as our communication tool, along with the self-learning website "NETTORE"

If children who wish to attend school are unable to do so, the learning gap with their peers widens. Through our activities, we help the juveniles create good study habits to ensure they don't fall behind. Our relationship with the juveniles is not that of a student and instructor, nor that of true equals, but rather a unique position that allows us to both aid their studies and discuss their concerns. We hope to continue engaging with these children to create a brighter society free from crime and delinquency, where no one gets left behind, either at school or in the community.

BBS member comments

With COVID-19 disrupting in-person activities, we found ourselves at a standstill at the local association level. Then the prefectural association reached out with this opportunity. Having no experience with online work I was uncertain at first, but decided to take part because I was interested in learning support.



For the past six months or so, I have been working via Zoom with a junior high school-aged boy who has learning difficulties. Initially, we would simply go through the online materials and answer any questions he had, starting and finishing at the allocated times. Then little by little, we started to chat before and after studying, and he began to look more relaxed. He is even becoming comfortable with reading and writing kanji, an area in which he previously struggled but is now gradually gaining confidence.

One of the best things about providing learning support is the chance to directly witness the child mastering something they couldn't do before. Since we began, a growing number of members have put their hands up to take part in learning support, which enables us to assist more juveniles.

As this is a new initiative amid the pandemic, participating members have had to figure many aspects out for themselves. Various challenges and difficulties have also cropped up. To deal with these, we hold weekly meetings where members report on their activities, share problems, and work together to find solutions. This initiative is suited to the COVID era, and I hope we can build on these experiences for future activities.

(2) PR & public awareness activities

Ex.1 Activities as part of the 70th “Campaign to Give Society a Brighter Future”

(Report from the Tokyo BBS Association)

As part of the above initiative, on Thursday 26 November 2020 we held an event at a hall in Shibuya, Tokyo, to tell the public about our BBS Association with the help of Yoshimoto comedians.



This publicity event was planned and run by our BBS Association, with full support from the entertainment production company. Incidentally, the company mainly uses this hall for performances by young comedians, and it has become a gathering place for their young fans. We took every possible precaution to prevent COVID-19 infections, including leaving every second seat empty. Many young people in particular turned out to view the event.

Since we had never before attempted to hold a BBS members-led event, in the beginning there was much chaos and confusion about what to do and how. Outside of our regular volunteer activities we had no experience in organizing an event, so there was also a fair amount of uncertainty. Thankfully, the weekly meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the production company helped in various ways, as we sought out ways to broadly promote and generate interest in our activities.

As we discussed our ideas and what we wanted to convey, the details gradually fell into place and the event took shape. We decided to focus on the people behind BBS activities, rather than the activities themselves, including a segment for sharing member experiences. While we had showcased our activities in the past, I believe this was the first time to shine the spotlight on our people. Among them, one member told of their shock at trying to offer learning support only to realize that what they had learned as a student was of little use in today's classrooms. Another spoke about a tug-of-war contest against students at a training school sports day, when the BBS members unwittingly got too serious and ended up winning.

This series of somewhat silly yet heartwarming episodes provided a laugh and filled the venue with a friendly atmosphere. Feedback forms after the event also showed that people wanted to hear more such stories. I hope this event spurs greater interest in BBS and the rehabilitation system.



Ex.2 Drug abuse prevention campaign

(Report from the Wakayama BBS Association)

Objective

Raise awareness to prevent drug abuse



Activity overview

BBS members learn about the problems of drug use and addiction through relevant training and collaborations with related organizations, enabling them to take part in counseling and awareness-raising activities aimed at preventing drug abuse.

- Serve as drug abuse prevention advisors in the prefecture
- Operate a nighttime drug counseling hotline, the Drug Recovery Line

The federation also supports a drug abuse prevention campaign and fundraising effort held across Japan for the UN's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. BBS associations around the country assist with awareness-raising activities and UN donation drives. Each year, the collected money is presented to UNODC by the Drug Abuse Prevention Center (DAPC Grant).

BBS Activities



Group activities



Training activities



Study support



Participation in international conferences



Rehabilitation Aid Center, 3rd floor,
5-10-9 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 151-0051 Japan
TEL: +81-3-3356-7383
E-mail: info.bbs@kouseihogo-net.jp
HP: <http://bbs-japan.org>



BBS Movement

Let's Start From
What We Can Do!



The Japan Federation of
Big Brothers and Sisters

ABOUT US

BBS (Big Brothers and Sisters) is a youth volunteer organization that aims to support the development of juveniles dealing with difficulties by serving as a brotherly or sisterly figure to them. As of 2020, there are approximately 5,000 members across Japan.

Over 70 Years of History

The roots of the BBS go back to the Big Brothers movement, which began in New York in 1904. The BBS movement in Japan was started by university students in Kyoto right after World War II in 1947 to take care of war-damaged orphans who fell into delinquency. We celebrated our 70th anniversary in 2017.

BBS Associations in Japan

Local BBS Associations

Local BBS associations engage in activities according to the local circumstances. Each member belongs to one association organized by local youths. There are over 300 local BBS associations nationwide (about 20% organized only by university students). About 60% of the members are under the age of 30.

Prefectural BBS Associations

Prefectural BBS associations, which are established in each jurisdictional area of the 50 probation offices around the country, are organized by local BBS associations. Prefectural BBS Associations support the local BBS associations' activities.

Regional BBS Associations

Regional BBS associations, which are established in each jurisdictional area of the eight regional parole boards around the country, offer activity support, training programs and workshops to its members.

The Japan Federation of BBS

The Japan Federation of BBS plays an important role in liaison and coordination among BBS associations throughout Japan. The Federation also provides members with various types of information regarding their services and promotes their activities for further development.



Friendship activities ("Tomodachi" activities)



In this program, a member forms a supportive relationship with a juvenile delinquent who is on probation or parole from the juvenile training school. Each member of the BBS partners up with one juvenile, communicates with them as a supporting partner and provides help to them. Through the activities, they are able to see things from the same perspective as these juveniles and assist them as peers.



Cooperation for social contribution activities



BBS members cooperate with probation officers and participate in social contribution activities. Through various activities such as cleaning public spaces, members can share the joy of contributing to society in a positive way for change with juveniles.



Delinquency prevention activities

BBS members carry out various public relations activities and events in the community and contribute to the realization of a bright society without crime and delinquency.

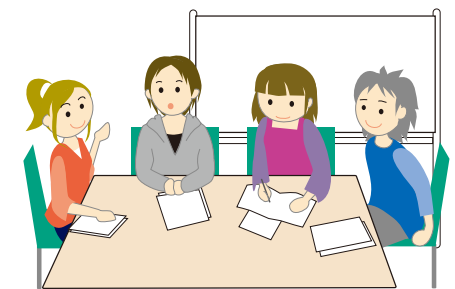


Group activities /Study support

Group activities encompass sports and recreation which enhance the ability of juveniles to reintegrate into society. BBS members also offer study support to them. These activities give them opportunities to have new experiences and to open up to others.



Training activities



To enhance activities, BBS members organize various types of training and meetings by themselves. These training events and meetings contribute to the improvement of their knowledge, skills and awareness of their activities.