



Towards  
**Sign Language  
Legislation**

Let's **GO**  
with Sign Language!  
(Part3)



一般財団法人 全日本ろうあ連盟  
Japanese Federation of the Deaf

# Why do we need a Sign Language Act?

In the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, two types of language are officially recognized, "**spoken language**" and "**sign language**." In Japan, the Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities specifically mentions "language (including sign language)." Furthermore, it is now essential to **understand** that sign language is equal to spoken language and to **promote its spread**.

By **protecting sign language** as a language to be acquired by infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and as a language that deaf people can use freely in their daily lives and at work, deaf people will be able to live freely in society.

In addition, it is important to publicize that **persons who are hard of hearing or late-deafened can use sign language as a means of communication**.

A **Sign Language Act is necessary** to create a "**sign language friendly society**" for the future.

## Reference

"Deaf people" refers to persons who cannot hear and mainly communicate using sign language in their daily lives.

Goal  
1

## Promote understanding that there are two types of language: spoken language and sign language.

In Japan, the term "shuwa (literally, 'hand talk')" is commonly used, but in the international community, the term "sign language" is used in English. In this pamphlet, **the term "sign language" is used** to clearly indicate signing ("shuwa") as a language.

Here, a few differences between sign language and spoken language are introduced.

- Sign language has a different grammatical system than spoken language. In sign language, personal opinions, feelings, and thoughts are visually expressed and communicated using the shape, position, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and degree of strength.

In spoken Japanese: mountains or sea, to which do you want to go?

Japanese Sign Language: mountain / sea / you want to go / which... (questioning expression)

- By watching the other person's expressions with your eyes, or in the case of deaf-blind people, by touching with your hands, a person is able to understand.

It is important for society as a whole to understand that there are deaf people who use sign language which has a different grammatical system than spoken language.

Goal  
2

## Promote the use of sign language and create a society where people who are deaf or hard of hearing can live together in harmony with hearing people.

As a language, sign language is equal to spoken language. If a Sign Language Act is enacted, the following can be promoted: infants and small children who are deaf or hard of hearing can grow up in a natural and fulfilling relationship with their guardians using sign language; they can learn sign language through education for the deaf and receive education in sign language; and they can freely use sign language in all aspects of their lives.

It is also important to promote awareness of the fact that sign language can be used as a means of communication by the deaf and hard of hearing.

We aim to create a society where sign language is understood, the human rights of people who are deaf or hard of hearing are respected, and **such people can live in harmony with hearing people.**

Sign language legislation is important to **guarantee the five sign language rights** in order to acquire and use sign language as equal to spoken language.

### The Five Sign Language Rights

- 1 Acquiring Sign Language**  
Ensuring opportunities to learn sign language
- 2 Learning in Sign Language**  
Guaranteeing the right to learn for the deaf
- 3 Learning about Sign Language**  
Learning sign language as a subject
- 4 Using Sign Language**  
Making sign language readily available to everyone in society
  - To create a system and environment where use of sign language is equal to that of spoken language
  - To quickly increase the number of sign language interpreters
  - To expand the sign language interpretation system in order to promote social participation by the deaf
  - To protect lives and guarantee access to information through sign language
- 5 Protecting Sign Language**  
Increasing, preserving, and researching words in sign language

# Ensuring opportunities to learn sign language

At birth, a newborn baby receives a hearing screening test. In cases where a child is found to be deaf or hard of hearing, early **support to acquire sign language** can greatly affect communication and language development. Currently, information regarding hearing aids and cochlear implants in order to acquire a spoken language is abundant, but **information to acquire sign language and support systems for the deaf to learn sign language are still insufficient in Japan.**

## Reference

Hearing aids and cochlear implants can help recover hearing to some extent, but they cannot restore hearing to the exact same level as that of a hearing person. There are many situations where it is difficult to hear, such as in a noisy environment, sound from a speaker, etc. Even people with hearing aids or cochlear implants can benefit from the use of sign language (language information which can be visually understood).



Photo provided by the Osaka Association of the Deaf (Support Project for Infants and Toddlers to Acquire Sign Language "Comekko" (funded by The Nippon Foundation))

Public and private sectors in Osaka work together to provide opportunities to learn sign language so infants and toddlers can acquire sign language as their native language, based on the Osaka Prefecture Sign Language Ordinance. Many children with cochlear implants also attend Comekko. As shown in the photo, a picture book is being read in sign language.

## Guaranteeing the right to learn for the deaf

When deaf or hard of hearing children learn at a **deaf school**, **positioning sign language as the common language is essential**. By conducting classes in sign language and creating a school environment where children can freely use sign language, "**detailed education for the deaf**" can be achieved. When deaf students study at a local school, university or other institution of higher learning, guaranteeing that teachers who have mastered sign language **provide lessons directly in sign language** and **sign language interpreters** are on hand is important so that **such students have the same right to learn as hearing students**.

### Reference

Schools especially equipped to provide education for the deaf are called Special Needs Schools for the Deaf, and are commonly referred to as deaf schools. Depending on their degree of hearing and whether they are equipped with a hearing aid or cochlear implant, some children may primarily use spoken language, while others may primarily use sign language. However, all children share sign language as the common form of communication.



Photo provided by Tokyo Metropolitan Otsuka Deaf School Elementary Division 2nd grade math class

## Learning sign language as a subject

Currently, deaf schools do not teach sign language as a subject. If sign language is established as an official subject, children who are deaf or hard of hearing will be able to thoroughly learn the sign language system and develop language skills needed to live as deaf persons.

Also, deaf children can deepen their understanding about the deaf by learning sign language, the same way students who can hear learn English in elementary and junior high schools. In addition, when students take a language course in high school and university, they should be able to choose a sign language as well.

Second Year, Class 2

Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
1	Japanese	Sign language	Japanese	Arithmetic
2	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Sign language
3	Life studies	Moral education	Music	Japanese
4	Physical education	Japanese	Drawing and crafts	Moral education

Is a schedule such as this possible at a deaf school?

## Making sign language readily available to everyone in society

To create a system and environment where use of sign language is equal to that of spoken language

**Creating a system and environment where use of sign language is equal to that of spoken language** is

essential to **resolve the disadvantages** such as being excluded from participation in community gatherings due to not understanding spoken conversations, or being marginalized in meetings and training at work due to a lack of interpretation into sign language.

Being able to have simple daily conversations in sign language, such as "Thank you" and "How are you" as well as the ability to participate in society through sign language interpretation will enrich the lives of the deaf.



To quickly increase the number of sign language interpreters

Currently, there is a shortage of sign language interpreters, and concern regarding the aging of the population. With sign language legislation, a greater number of opportunities to learn sign language as a language at universities and other institutions is expected. Similar to training for other foreign language interpreters, courses on sign language interpreting are expected to be established, and more and more young people will dream of becoming sign language interpreters as a career choice.



Photo provided by the National Research Association for Sign Language Interpretation  
Sign language interpreting course



## To expand the sign language interpretation system in order to promote social participation by the deaf

As awareness of sign language increases, understanding of the role of sign language interpreters will also increase dramatically. As an increasing number of deaf people using sign language participate in society, opportunities for hearing people to learn from deaf people who are active in various fields will increase, and more persons who can interpret sign language will be needed for the hearing people. The role of sign language interpreters is to **support two-way communication between deaf people and hearing people**, and **establishing and strengthening a system that guarantees sign language interpretation** in all areas of society is needed.

## To protect lives and guarantee access to information through sign language

When a disaster, such as a typhoon or earthquake, is about to happen, it is important to promptly check the news and weather information and take action to protect one's own life. However, most information is in spoken Japanese. When the Prime Minister or Chief Cabinet Secretary holds a press conference, a sign language interpreter is provided. However, in the TV broadcast, **the interpreter is often outside the view**.

With sign language legislation, life-saving broadcasts in both spoken and sign languages will be required, providing peace of mind to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition, people who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot use a sound-based telephone. The Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is **developing a public infrastructure for the Telephone Relay Service**, where sign language operators and text operators connect callers with hearing persons. With this service, people who are deaf or hard of hearing can make phone calls in their daily lives and work the same as hearing persons, including emergency calls in life-threatening situations.



Photo courtesy of Mainichi Shimbun  
Sign language interpretation at an emergency press conference held by the Japan Meteorological Agency



Illustration of the Telephone Relay Service

## Increasing, preserving, and researching words in sign language

As society evolves and culture develops, and as social participation by the deaf and hard of hearing increases, **sign language will also develop and evolve**. Moreover it is also affected by changes in spoken Japanese.

New judiciary terms have been created to respond to the introduction of the lay judge system in Japan, and new weather terms have also been made lately in response to disaster relief efforts. In addition, as interpretation into sign language becomes more widespread, new expressions in sign language to communicate terms for current events, as well as the new Japanese era name are also created.

At present, the **Japan Institute for Sign Language Studies** of the Japan National Center of Sign Language Education is working towards the establishment of new sign language words and preservation of old sign language words, and researching foreign sign languages. These activities are performed using the budget allocated by the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

With sign language legislation, such research on sign language should be conducted, not from the view of sign language as a welfare activity, but as a language equal to spoken Japanese. Just as the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics is a national organization that conducts research on the Japanese language and Japanese language education, sign language also needs to be investigated and researched by a national organization.



Publication of NEW SIGNS



Expressing "Reiwa" (the new Japanese era name) as defined by the Japan Institute for Sign Language Studies

# Creating an inclusive society through sign language

Respecting the rights of deaf people through sign language is essential. It is important for everyone to understand the social model where society is responsible to remove social barriers, change behavior, and transform how society works as a whole. Eugenic thought such as "being able to hear is better than being deaf" or "being able to speak is better than not being able to" must be eliminated. **The rights of deaf persons who use sign language should be respected the same as those of hearing persons.**

It is also important for people who have acquired spoken language to be able to use sign language as a means of communication. People who are hard of hearing need visual methods along with hearing aids and cochlear implants, and sign language can benefit them for more enriched and effective communication. For hearing persons, learning sign language as a language and learning to live in harmony with those who are deaf or hard of hearing have great meaning.

# Expanding Sign Language Ordinances

From 2013, local assemblies throughout Japan began supporting a movement to **submit a written opinion to the national government for sign language legislation**. On March 3, 2016, **1,741 assemblies from all the prefectures and municipalities of Japan endorsed the opinion**. This was the **first time in the history of the constitutional government that the endorsement rate of a single bill by local assemblies was 100%**.

Since then, sign language ordinances have been established throughout Japan, and **as of December 24, 2019, 297 municipalities (27 prefectures, 8 wards, 218 cities, 43 towns and 1 village) have enacted sign language ordinances**. In addition, these local governments also allocated funds for measures such as the promotion of sign language among citizens, improvement of sign language interpretation systems, and projects to protect sign language.

Achieved **100%** endorsement for the written opinion by the local assemblies!  
(March 3, 2016)

Number of local governments that endorsed / Number of local governments			
Prefectures		Municipalities	
Tokyo Metropolitan	1/1	Wards	23/23
Hokkaido	1/1	Cities	790/790
Osaka-Fu, Kyoto-Fu	2/2	Towns	745/745
Other prefectures	43/43	Villages	183/183
<b>Total</b>	<b>47/47</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,741/1,741</b>



October 4, 2019: Yamaguchi Prefecture Sign Language Ordinance passed



October 10, 2019: Eniwa City (in Hokkaido) Sign Language Ordinance passed

## Examples of measures taken by individual municipalities

### - Tottori Prefecture

The budget covers various projects, including holding mini-sign language lectures for prefectural residents, subsidies for sign language circles, sign language awareness events and workshops for sign language interpreters and service workers, training for instructors of sign language interpreting, implementation of remote sign language (interpretation) services and the Telephone Relay Services, and support for efforts to organize and record Tottori's sign language and preserve local sign language.

### - Ishikari City, Hokkaido

In AY 2017, a Sign Language Course was started at Ishikari Shoyo High School as an elective course. The course is comprised of a theoretical and a practical class, aiming not only to learn sign language but to also deepen its understanding as a language.

### - Fujimi City, Saitama

"Let's have fun with sign language" introduces words in sign language and is published in the city's PR magazine, FUJIMI. You can also view it in AR (augmented reality) video.

### - Shizuoka Prefecture

In addition to holding sign language classes for prefectural employees, sign language instructors are sent to sign language workshops to teach residents of the prefecture and company managers. An educational video about the prefecture's sign language ordinance is also distributed on YouTube.

### - Mie Prefecture

Funds for the following projects have been allocated: sign language courses for residents of the prefecture, training programs for prefectural employees and city employees, sign language videos on the prefectural website, and the development of curriculum for training courses to improve the skills of sign language service workers.

### - Osaka Prefecture

Funds have been allocated for a new sign language course for working adults. In addition, the Support Project for Infants and Toddlers to Acquire Sign Language "Comekko" was initiated through a grant from The Nippon Foundation and in cooperation with the prefectural government and organization for the hearing impaired.

### - Nagano Prefecture

A budget for the production of sign language guidebooks, sign language dictionaries, sign language tourist guide videos, as well as the holding of sign language classes for prefectural residents has been allocated and implemented.

### - Gunma Prefecture

In addition to holding sign language classes for prefectural employees and events aimed at promoting and raising awareness about sign language among people of the prefecture, an extension course, "Learning Sign Language Linguistics through Sign Language," was also held at and co-hosted with Gunma University. Furthermore, funds have been allocated for instruction in subjects using sign language and training sessions for teachers at deaf schools, in order to improve the educational environment so sign language can be acquired from infancy.

### - Okinawa Prefecture

In order to promote and raise awareness of sign language, the Okinawa Prefecture held the "Let's Talk with Hands" PR event. The third Wednesday of every month is designated as "Sign Language Promotion Day" and basic sign language is introduced through the prefecture's website.



Pamphlets from each municipality

# International Day of Sign Languages

On September 23, 2018, events were held around the world, including Japan, to celebrate the International Day of Sign Languages, and related videos were posted on social media. September 23 was chosen as the International Day of Sign Languages because it was the day the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) was founded, September 23, 1951.

In Europe, many countries have established Sign Language Acts, but in Asia, including Japan, legislation has yet to be enacted due to a lack of awareness of sign language.

As a result of an initiative by WFD, a resolution declaring September 23 as the International Day of Sign Languages was adopted by the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations in 2017. The resolution was cosponsored by 98 countries, which is more than half of all the UN Member States, including Japan.

The objective of the resolution is to encourage UN Member States to take steps to raise awareness of sign languages throughout society, so that sign languages are recognized as equal to spoken languages and the human rights of deaf people are fully guaranteed.



XVIII World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf (Paris, July 2019)



International Day of Sign Languages events in 2018

I'm also

looking forward to  
sign language  
legislation.

- Mr. **Shinji Hirai**,  
Governor of Tottori Prefecture  
President of Governors' Assembly to  
Promotion of Sign Language

Sign language is a "language," the same as Japanese and English. The Sign Language Ordinance was enacted in Tottori Prefecture for the first time in Japan and has spread nationwide, and even the schools and workplaces in Tottori Prefecture have also changed.

Let's establish an inclusive society by sign language legislation.



- Ms. **Naoko Takahashi**  
Gold medalist in women's marathon at  
the Sydney Olympics

I have been blessed with the opportunity to visit many places in the world during my career, and even after retiring. Although there were many frustrating times when words could not be understood, I tried to communicate with others by seeking to understand and respect the other person. I support the immediate legislation for sign language for more meaningful communication.



- Mr. **Yohei Sasakawa**,  
Chairman of The Nippon Foundation

The Nippon Foundation aims for the realization of an inclusive society. Sign language legislation is an important activity of The Nippon Foundation so that sign language, which is used as the native language of approximately 60,000 Japanese, is officially recognized as one of the languages of Japan.



- Mr. **Mitsuhiro Hoshino**,  
Mayor of Fujimi City, Saitama  
Prefecture  
President of Japan Association of  
Mayors on Sign Language

With sign language legislation, I hope that more people will recognize sign language as a language, understanding of sign language will become widespread and a society where people who use sign language can live their daily lives with peace of mind is achieved.



- Mr. **Ryo Matsuda**, Lawyer (deaf)

I think many issues are difficult to resolve under the current legal system. For example, establishing an environment where deaf children can acquire and learn sign language and training sign language interpreters who can respond to legal, medical and other specialized fields. I sincerely hope that a Sign Language Act will be enacted to resolve problems faced by the deaf.





# Towards Sign Language Legislation

## — Progress to Date

The Japanese Federation of the Deaf (Headquarters for Promotion of Legislation for Japanese Sign Language) announced the Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan in 2012. JFD spent two years from 2016 revising the draft in response to opinions received from various fields, and published a revised draft in March 2018.

This is the Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan as we know it today.

### Main events and activities

2010	A study group for the promotion of sign language legislation launched (October)
2012	The Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan announced
2013	The campaign for the endorsement for a written opinion calling for sign language legislation began The first sign language ordinance in Japan passed in Tottori Prefecture The first sign language ordinance at the city level in Japan passed in Ishikari City
2014	Model proposals for a prefectural ordinance and a municipal ordinance announced
2015	The nationwide meetings for legislation of Japanese Sign Language Act (Summer and Winter Rallies) held in Tokyo Korean Sign Language Act passed
2016	A written opinion calling for sign language legislation: 100% endorsement by local assemblies achieved Japan Association of Mayors on Sign Language established Governors' Assembly to Promotion of Sign Language established
2017	All prefectures in Japan joined Governors' Assembly to Promotion of Sign Language The International Day of Sign Languages officially recognized by the UN General Assembly (December)
2018	The revised Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan announced The commemorative event for the International Day of Sign Languages held (September 23)
2019	Sign language ordinances enacted in a total of 297 municipalities (as of December 24)



## Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan

### General Rules (Objective)

#### Article 1

The purpose of the Japanese Sign Language Act is to determine matters related to the acquisition, learning and use of Japanese sign language (hereinafter referred to as "sign language") and to promote the comprehensive and systematic implementation of all measures related to sign language, in order to achieve a society where sign language is recognized as a language equivalent to spoken Japanese, and where the deaf can use sign language in their home, at school, in the community and in every place in their daily life and enjoy a rich culture based on sign language.

### (Definition)

#### Article 2

The term "sign language" as used in this act shall refer to the language used by people, including persons in Japan who are deaf or deaf-blind in order to lead their own lives, which has a distinctive language system and is the cultural product of linguistic activities that lead to the cultivation of rich humanity and an intellectual and fulfilling life.

2. The term "deaf" shall refer to persons who cannot hear (including persons who are hard of hearing) and who use sign language in their daily and social lives.

3. The term "deaf children" shall refer to children (including infants and young children) who cannot hear or are hard of hearing.

4. The "deaf community" shall refer to a community that is mainly comprised of deaf persons who use sign language in their daily and social lives.

### (Responsibilities of the National and Local Governments)

#### Article 3

In order to achieve the purpose as set forth in Article 1, the national and local governments shall be responsible for the comprehensive and systematic implementation of measures that promote language activities and sign language culture in order for deaf persons to lead fulfilling lives using sign language.

## 2018 Japanese Federation of the Deaf

### (Basic Plan for Persons with Disabilities, etc.)

#### Article 4

In order to develop a basic policy plan for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the "Basic Plan for Persons with Disabilities"), the government shall formulate a

plan for comprehensive measures for the promotion of language activities and sign language culture in order for deaf persons to lead a fulfilling life using sign language.

2. The national and local governments shall seek the opinions of the Sign Language Council when formulating and implementing policies on the promotion of language activities and sign language culture in the Basic Plan for Persons with Disabilities.

### Chapter 2. Acquisition and Learning of Sign Language

#### (Acquisition of Sign Language)

#### Article 5

Deaf children shall be guaranteed opportunities to acquire sign language and an environment that promotes the linguistic identity of the deaf community.

2. The national and local governments shall provide the needed information from the standpoint of promoting the development of proficiency in sign language and Japanese language (hereinafter referred to as "language proficiency") among deaf children, and their guardians and families.

3. In order to deepen understanding of sign language, the national and local governments shall provide opportunities for parents and families of deaf children to learn sign language in addition to providing consultation and support for education.

#### (Learning of Sign Language)

#### Article 6

Deaf children shall be guaranteed opportunities to learn sign language according to their developmental stage in order to deepen their linguistic proficiency and understanding of language culture.

2. The national government shall formulate the positioning of sign language in the Courses of Study as stipulated in the School Education Law as a required subject in

special education schools, etc. for deaf children.

3. According to the preceding paragraph, when a deaf child is enrolled in a school other than a special support school, necessary measures to learn sign language shall be taken.

4. For persons who have lost their hearing after acquiring the Japanese language, the national and local governments shall provide opportunities to learn sign language as a means of communication.

5. The national and local governments shall seek to provide images in which information written in Japanese is translated into sign language as learning materials.

### **Chapter 3. Use of Sign Language (Education)**

#### **Article 7**

Deaf children and deaf persons (hereinafter referred to as “deaf children, etc.”) have the right to receive an education without discrimination against their disability, and shall be guaranteed opportunities to receive education in sign language.

2. Persons/entities that establish a school for deaf children, etc. shall provide an educational environment for sign language so that deaf children, etc. can learn sign language and learn in sign language from infancy onward.

3. Persons/entities that establish a school for deaf children, etc. shall assign teachers and staff (including deaf teachers and staff) with sign language skills or sign language interpreters as needed, as well as provide training for teachers and staff to improve their expertise and teaching methods.

4. Persons/entities that establish a school for deaf children, etc. shall take the necessary measures to improve the sign language skills of the teaching staff.

5. The national and local governments, etc. shall provide the necessary support to facilitate the implementation of measures listed from Paragraph 2 to Paragraph 4 of this article by educational institutions, etc.

6. The national and local governments shall provide children and students with education on sign language and opportunities to learn sign language in school.

7. The national and local governments shall take measures to implement the preceding paragraph, such as developing manuals,

etc. that can be used in school education.

#### **(Special support education, etc. for deaf children)**

##### **Article 8**

It is desirable for the government to promote education in two languages, sign language and Japanese, for the rehabilitation and education of deaf children.

2. Special support schools, etc. for deaf children shall provide an environment in which deaf children can freely use sign language in their community life and activities in order to develop and improve their language and communication skills.

3. In special support schools for deaf children, the national and local governments shall promote the appointment of teaching staff who are deaf and can use sign language in order to improve the linguistic proficiency as well as to promote personality development of such children.

4. Universities and other teacher training institutions shall develop curricula by which students can sufficiently acquire sign language in the process of obtaining a teaching license for special support schools (hearing impairment), in order to train teachers who are capable of improving sign language proficiency and providing guidance in personality development for deaf children.

#### **(Communication)**

##### **Article 9**

Deaf persons shall be guaranteed the opportunity to receive direct communication services in sign language and indirect communication services through sign language interpreters.

2. Business entities, etc. that provide communication services shall provide an appropriate environment so that deaf persons can provide such communication services in sign language, and deaf persons are able to receive such communication services in sign language accurately.

#### **(Public facilities, etc.)**

##### **Article 10**

The national and local governments shall use sign language in addition to Japanese when carrying out their functions and authority, by promoting the use of services provided by public entities, and providing information to citizens.

2. When using services provided by public entities or following administrative procedures, deaf persons shall have the option to use sign language.

3. When providing information to citizens, the national and local governments shall ensure that information is provided equally to deaf persons through persons who can use sign language (including deaf persons), or through sign language interpreters.

### **(Political participation)**

#### **Article 11**

The national and local governments shall facilitate the participation and observation by deaf persons in national or local government elections (including eligibility), referendums, direct requests by residents, petitions and public assemblies, etc., as well as the ability to receive and transmit information, in sign language.

2. Deaf persons shall be guaranteed the opportunity to choose and use sign language in order to participate in politics.

3. The national and local governments shall ensure that all political information is available to deaf persons in sign language through people with sign language skills (including deaf persons), or through a sign language interpreter.

### **(Judicial Proceedings)**

#### **Article 12**

Deaf persons shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and the use sign language during any judicial proceeding, including a trial in court, or participation in or observation of judicial proceedings (including from the investigation stage to the completion of sentencing).

2. In the event the police, public prosecutors and/or court become aware that a deaf person has chosen to participate in a judicial-related procedure using sign language, such authority shall immediately assign a sign language interpreter.

3. In the event a deaf person wishes to have documents written in Japanese characters provided by visual translation in sign language instead, the police, public prosecutors and/or court shall provide such translation.

### **(Labor and Employment)**

#### **Article 13**

Deaf persons shall have the same right to

work with persons without disabilities, without discrimination against their disability, and shall be guaranteed the opportunity to use sign language in their workplace.

2. Employers shall seek to provide support, including environmental improvement and reasonable accommodation, and shall appoint sign language interpreters so that employees who are deaf can continue to work.

3. The national and local governments shall take measures required to ensure that employers provide the necessary support and reasonable accommodation.

### **(Private facilities, etc.)**

#### **Article 14**

Deaf persons shall be guaranteed the opportunity to use sign language in all situations, including private facilities, without discrimination against their disability.

2. Within the health and medical fields, deaf persons shall have the same opportunity as persons without disability to obtain information and self-determination regarding health and medical care. In order to implement this, medical and health care institutions, etc. shall appoint persons with sign language skills (including deaf persons) or sign language interpreters.

3. Professionals who may come in contact with deaf persons (including doctors, speech therapists, etc.) shall be required to learn sign language in their training course.

4. Within the commercial and commercial services fields, efforts shall be made to create an environment where the appropriate sign language can be provided in order to guarantee the rights of consumers who use sign language.

5. The national and local governments shall implement measures necessary to provide the needed support and reasonable accommodation in private facilities, etc. for deaf persons who use sign language.

### **(Broadcasting)**

#### **Article 15**

Public and commercial broadcasting organizations shall provide all programs in sign language so deaf persons can view the broadcast the same as persons without disabilities, without discrimination against their disability.

2. Public and commercial broadcasters shall seek to develop sign language programs

and programs with sign language.

3 The national government shall implement measures to ensure that public and commercial broadcasting organizations, etc. provide needed support and reasonable accommodation for deaf persons.

#### **(Culture and Sports)**

##### **Article 16**

The national and local governments shall implement measures to promote the development of cultural, artistic and sports activities in sign language.

#### **Chapter 4. Sign Language Interpretation System**

##### **(Sign Language Interpretation System)**

##### **Article 17**

Deaf persons shall be guaranteed the opportunity to use the service of sign language interpreters without cost when participating in society.

2. Sign language interpreters who are employed for an unspecified period of time shall be appointed to facilities that meet the standards separately specified by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare.

3. In cases where it is difficult to hire a sign language interpreter, a sign language interpreter registered in the Community Life Support Services as stipulated in the Act on the Comprehensive Support for the Daily and Social Life of Persons with Disabilities (Services and Support for Persons with Disability Act) shall be dispatched.

4. Training and qualification of sign language interpreters shall be carried out as separately specified by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare.

5. Other measures required by the sign language interpretation system shall be established.

#### **Chapter 5. Sign Language Councils, etc.**

##### **(Sign Language Councils)**

##### **Article 18**

For the development, dissemination and promotion of sign language, the Sign Language Council shall be established in the Cabinet Office to deliberate on important matters related to sign language plans and measures implemented by the national and local governments, and to provide opinions to the Prime Minister or relevant ministers when deemed necessary.

2. The Sign Language Council shall

deliberate on the following matters:

(i) The formulation of sign language plans for the development, dissemination and promotion of sign language,

(ii) Monitoring of the implementation of sign language plans and measures and related recommendations,

(iii) The Sign Language Interpretation System, and

(iv) Other necessary matters.

3. The Sign Language Council shall include experts in sign language linguistics, pedagogy and related fields, and representatives of organizations comprised of deaf persons who use sign language.

4. Minutes, etc. of the Sign Language Council shall be recorded in sign language and in Japanese, and disclosed to the public in sign language images and Japanese.

#### **(Sign Language Research Center)**

##### **Article 19**

A sign language research center shall be established for continued research and study in the development, use, dissemination and promotion of sign language.

2. The sign language research center shall implement the following items:

(i) Survey, research, determination and dissemination of sign language,

(ii) Development of sign language subjects,

(iii) Development of evaluation methods for Sign Language proficiency,

(iv) Collection of information on sign language, and

(v) Other necessary matters.

#### **Chapter 6. Miscellaneous Provisions**

##### **(Sign Language Day)**

##### **Article 20**

Sign Language Day shall be held to encourage citizens to increase their interest in and understanding of sign language and sign language culture.

2. Sign Language Day shall be on:

\_\_\_\_\_ (month / day).

3. The national and local governments shall seek to hold events appropriate for the purpose of Sign Language Day.

#### **(International Exchange)**

##### **Article 21**

The national government shall implement

measures needed to promote international exchange by supporting the translation of Japanese sign language as well as publications and images into foreign sign language, in order to make sign language cultures of various countries available to citizens of Japan and to introduce Japanese sign language culture to a wider audience internationally.

The Draft of Sign Language Act in Japan can be viewed in a sign language video version here.

<https://www.jfd.or.jp/info/misc/sgh/vhouan/>



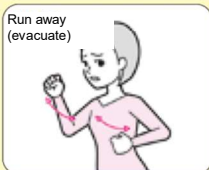
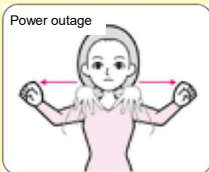
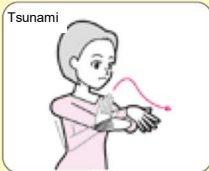
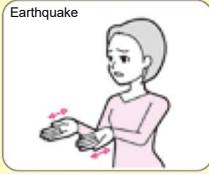
In addition, the Five Rights of Sign Language, which should be guaranteed by the Japanese Sign Language Act, can be viewed in a sign language video version.

<https://www.jfd.or.jp/info/misc/sgh/vgo25/>

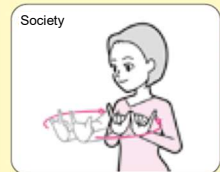
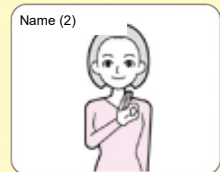
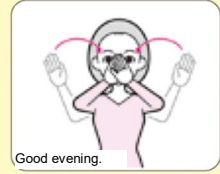
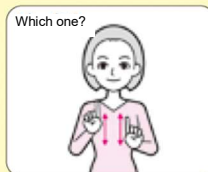
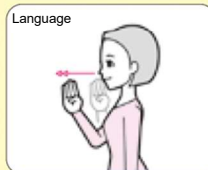


# Let's learn some useful sign language words!

## Disaster-related



## Daily communication



<To ask a question>

Try to convey the feeling of asking a question with a facial expression as well as your hands.



## Towards Sign Language Legislation — Let's GO with Sign Language! (Part3)

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