

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama (83) May 8, 2017 Issue

**【Support to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Childcare】**

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

The other day, we announced that the number of children on waiting lists for certified nursery schools or kindergartens in Okayama City marked 849 as of 1 April this year. This is the largest ever recorded and increased by 120 compared with last year.

In Okayama City, the number of children on waiting lists has been regarded as zero for a long time. However, the last year's review on the definition in line with the actual situation of citizen's lives revealed that the actual number was the second worst 729 in the country.

After that, we have been working on the issue so that a record number of 1,029 children could receive childcare but actually only 713 were able to obtain admissions. (833 if including those who have direct contracts with businesses)

The number of applications for admission exceeded last year by 770. It is regrettable to know the increasing number of waiting children as well as the surging childcare needs.

In the last 1 or 2 years, we have been working on measures which take into account the living conditions of citizens such as the review of the definition of children on waiting lists and childcare fee reduction. Also we abolished the system which does not allow a guardian on maternity/paternity leave to use childcare for a baby's siblings. However these measures seem to have evoked potential needs for childcare.

Although I am satisfied with these policies to support women, I feel sorry for not having met citizens' expectations enough yet.

In addition, a feature of this issue is that this is too crucial and urgent to ask parents for their patience for another couple of years. For October this year, now we are working on securing nursery services for additional 183 children and requesting nursery schools with space to increase the number of children they accept. All the effort is being exerted to make the situation better for as many children as possible and as soon as possible.

As the City of Okayama put top priority on this issue, we will continue to work hard to achieve the society where every child in need can receive childcare. Also, we would like to provide sufficient support to citizens who need help.

Please feel free to consult Hoiku Concierge (supporters for childcare users) if you have any concern in use of childcare services.

**\*Hoiku Concierge's Contacts**

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