

Declaration of the Deaf Movement 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the lives of people not only in Japan but also around the world, and many have been suffering in ways never experienced before for more than a year. Not only were various events of the Japanese Federation of the Deaf (JFD) canceled, but the lives of the deaf also changed drastically, making it impossible for them to "meet," "gather" and "talk" with friends in sign language, which were the basis of their activities.

Last year, the JFD set up the "COVID-19 Crisis Management Task Force" and has continued to seek various measures to protect the human rights of the deaf against COVID-19. As the social situation continues to worsen, those of us who are deaf often find ourselves unknowingly left behind by society. The Deaf movement especially shows its strength in times of difficulty, but this is only possible with the excellent cooperation and support of our members and regional organizations.

With this in mind, we will join forces with our friends to address each difficulty that arise in a "new lifestyle" one by one and tackle the problems we face.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, a disaster of unprecedented scale. Many of our friends lost their precious lives, and we learned firsthand the horror of disaster and the importance of information sharing in times of disaster. Since then, many other disasters have occurred, including the Kumamoto Earthquake and flooding caused by Typhoon No. 19. Still, even 10 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, people who are deaf or hard of hearing cannot receive enough information in times of disaster or other emergencies, and as a result their lives may be threatened. We will continue to work on disaster prevention measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and provide support including offering access to information for the disabled in the event of a disaster.

In addition, the Telephone Relay Service was launched in July 2021 as a national public system to enable people who are deaf or hard of hearing to use the telephone through an interpreter with whom they can communicate in sign language or via text message. We live in a time when our lives are changing, and we must continue to spread awareness that sign language is equivalent to other spoken languages.

We declare that we will continue the Deaf movement in order to realize a truly mutually beneficial society where we can face difficulties along with our friends who are deaf, hard of hearing or hearing, and truly feel connected.

June 12, 2021

Japanese Federation of the Deaf, 9th (72nd in total) General Assembly