

Thematic Session  
Disability

The Current State and Direction  
of Post-COVID Support for the Disabled in  
Gwangju

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The Gwangju Metropolitan Government (GMG) has been offering welfare services by creating a comprehensive policy plan for the disabled (2019–2020) to ensure that more than 70,000 people with disabilities in Gwangju all lead a safe, happy, independent, and equitable life.

The COVID–19 pandemic that swept the world also affected the entire Korea last year, and this brought to light the importance of and need for support of the disabled among local governments.

In response to the spread of the pandemic, the GMG worked with municipality offices and other organizations to strengthen the support necessary for families with disabled members. It also strived to minimize user inconveniences by reducing the number of people housed in institutions and breaking programs into smaller components in line with the government guidelines on response at social welfare facilities and the manual on response to infectious diseases for people with disabilities (April 2021), which comply with social distancing policy. The GMG also designated a special week for the disabled during which its employees visited local disabled people, groups, and institutions to listen to their voices and incorporate them into customized policy measures.

After the tragic news about the death of a woman and her disabled child, the GMG opened a care center for people with severe developmental disabilities in the Gwangju area to strike the right balance between the protection of the disabled and their independence and to create a system that helps families with disabled members return to a normal life.

To address the potential periodic spread of infectious diseases, the GMG will develop plans to support those who are vulnerable to infections or have been relatively underserved by taking into account the unique circumstances of the disabled in this pandemic situation (a higher infection rate compared to people without disabilities and the complex nature of losses suffered by the disabled). It will also develop a system for cooperation among departments related to infectious diseases, devise a plan to prevent cluster infections at institutions and support them, and create and disseminate disaster response manuals for people with different types of disabilities.