

**Statement for Media Outlets**  
May 10, 2023

RE: Representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses Cooperate with the Children and Families Agency

On May 10, 2023, representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses participated in a constructive meeting with officials from the Children and Families Agency (CFA). This was in furtherance to a meeting held with officials from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) on March 31.

During the meeting with the MHLW, officials asked for the cooperation of Jehovah's Witnesses as an organization to remind their congregants in Japan that child abuse is not condoned, that congregation elders should not instruct or force parents to refuse blood transfusions for their child, and that parents must continue to care for their dependent child in the event he or she is disfellowshipped. Officials also asked for the congregants to be informed about the issuance of the *Q&A Guideline on Handling Child Abuse and Similar Cases Related to Religious and Similar Beliefs* produced by the MHLW. The officials mentioned that their request was not legally binding or mandatory.

In accordance with the authorities' request, Jehovah's Witnesses gladly reconfirmed their desire to cooperate with the CFA during their meeting. The reminders below have been presented to CFA officials and subsequently provided to all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan:

Jehovah's Witnesses wish to reiterate and emphasize that they consider children as precious gifts from God and take seriously their responsibility to care for their children's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. They strive to make their children feel loved and secure. Furthermore, parents are responsible for their children. Accordingly, based on Bible principles, parents make decisions that benefit the family in matters such as medical treatment, education, and religious activities. Keeping in mind that free will is a God given gift for all, including young ones, parents should help their children to develop in such a way that they can make personal decisions motivated by love for God and for others.

**Discipline of Children:** Jehovah's Witnesses do not tolerate child abuse. The Bible states: "Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) It tells us that God "hates anyone who loves violence." (Ps. 11:5) *The Watchtower* of July 1, 2014, page 10, says: "In the Bible, the word for 'discipline' ... primarily relates to instruction, education, and correction. It is never connected with abuse or cruelty."

Regarding when and how to counsel children, *The Watchtower* of February 2022, page 19, advises: "Before counseling a young one, the parent might ask himself: 'Do I have to make an issue over this matter? Will I handle the situation in a balanced, loving way, or should I wait until I am not irritated? Do I have all the facts? Is there something happening in my child's life that I am unaware of? After the counsel is given, will my child know that he has been treated fairly and with love?' There is never a reason for a Christian parent to treat his children harshly."

**Medical Decisions:** Jehovah's Witnesses cherish and deeply respect the gift of life. They carefully consider Bible principles when making choices that affect their physical, mental, and emotional health. They collaborate with health-care professionals to obtain the best medical care available.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe and teach that whether to accept any form of treatment, including a blood transfusion, is a personal decision for each person to make without being forced or pressured by others. *The Watchtower* of February 2023, published in October 2022, pages 23-25 says: "Jehovah's Witnesses are well-known for their respect for the sacredness of blood. We obey Jehovah's law regarding blood by refusing to accept a blood transfusion ... (Acts 15:28, 29) However, that does not mean that we want to die. On the contrary, we cherish God's gift of life. We seek the help of medical professionals who are willing to provide high-quality care that does not involve a blood transfusion ... [Elders] will not make medical decisions for you. That is your responsibility. (Gal. 6:4, 5) ... [We do not] pressure others into adopting our viewpoint."

Parents or legal guardians are responsible to make medical decisions for their children. Elders can assist upon request, but they will not make decisions for parents or advance personal views on matters of individual choice. (Rom. 14:12; Gal. 6:5) When individual Jehovah's Witnesses decide to inform their local elders that they are facing a medical situation that may involve blood, the elders will promptly assist in contacting the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC), if the publisher requests it. The elders will make available the contact information of the HLC in order for the publisher to directly interact with them and receive assistance if desired. The HLC does not make medical decisions or pressure Witnesses but assists in locating qualified clinicians who can help.

**Care for a Disfellowshipped Child:** In the event a minor child is disfellowshipped, parents are still responsible for their child. Just as they will continue to provide him with food, clothing and shelter, they need to instruct and discipline him in line with God's Word. Parents need to be attentive to the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of their children.

Are Christians living in the same household with a disfellowshipped family member required to avoid talking to, eating with, and associating with that one as they go about their daily activities? *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1991, in the footnote on page 22, states: "If in a Christian's household there is a disfellowshipped relative, that one would still be part of the normal, day-to-day household dealings and activities."

In addition to the above, all congregations have been reminded of the parents' responsibility to remain aware of the latest legislation related to the protection and welfare of children.

Jehovah's Witnesses appreciate all government authorities that have been entrusted with caring for the welfare of children and that diligently fulfill their responsibilities.

Japan Public Information Department of Jehovah's Witnesses