

# Supporting local consumer administration

## Supporting the frontline of consumer affairs administration

Consumer affairs centers located in municipalities and prefectures across the nation are the points of contact for consumers seeking consultation services.

The number of consultation cases brought to consumer affair centers across the nation was approximately 911,000 per year (FY2017). They operate as the frontline of consumer affairs administration by offering services such as providing information/advice to consulters and working as a liaison between consulters and business operators handling problems requiring conflict resolution. The Consumer Affairs Agency supports local governments with its financial assistance such as a grant to strengthen local consumer administration in order to improve consumer affairs centers in their municipalities and prefectures, address the existing consumer problems in their local communities, and handle new consumer problems in an appropriate manner.

## First step to cope with problems: Consumer Hotline - 188

The Consumer Affairs Agency has created a "Consumer Hotline" that, by carrying a nationally common phone number, facilitates access to a nearby consumer consultation contact point to help consumers who do not know where to call for help. The Consumer Affairs Agency encourages consumers to use the Consumer Hotline for those who do not know where to turn to for consultation on consumer problems.



(Available in Japanese only)

## Preventing harm to vulnerable consumers such as elderly consumers

To effectively prevent harm to vulnerable consumers such as elderly consumers, it is critical for the local community to “watch over” these people in accordance with their circumstances.

As for the elderly suffering dementia and people with disabilities, those who are around them must notice the signs of consumer problems to prevent the occurrence of such problems and stop the expansion of damage. Not only their families but also various community members need to cooperate with each other to strengthen “watch over” in their communities.

The revision of the Consumer Safety Act (June 2014) made it possible to organize the “Local Council for Ensuring Consumer Safety (Watch Over Network).” It is expected that the specific information that becomes the key factor to identify consumer damage in a community (“Trigger Information”) leads to consultation at a consumer affairs center for sure. The Consumer Affairs Agency strives to encourage local governments to set up the Local Council for Ensuring Consumer Safety through various initiatives such as releasing the collection of actual cases.

In addition, the Consumer Affairs Agency supports the local governments working to establish the Local Council for Ensuring Consumer Safety by offering subsidies such as a grant to strengthen local consumer administration.