

Disaster Preparedness for Diverse Children: Provision for Special Needs Schools in Japan

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Background

There are special needs schools where children with disabilities and medical care attend school in Japan. If we cannot go home in a disaster event, we must protect their lives at school. Residents usually evacuate to the schools. The school supports evacuating not only children, but also neighbors. Children in special needs schools require physical condition management such as temperature control, special equipment, and electric power. These shortages are directly linked to the risk of life.

Aim of the study

To investigate problems and actual conditions in disaster preparation.

Methods

In 2020, we asked 1,310 special needs schools throughout Japan to conduct a self-written mail survey. Responses were from 604 schools, and answers were tabulated.

Results

A total of 367 (69.1%) schools have responded, 226 (37.4%) schools prepared materials for evacuating residents, 220 (36%) schools organized events with residents >4 times a year, 275 (45%) schools expected that enrolled children and residents would spend time in evacuation centers during disasters, 415 (68%) one night's equipment was prepared for students, and the generator was equipped in 403 (67%) schools.

Conclusions and implications

In a disaster event, local residents evacuated to schools with special facilities. However, it was not enough to prepare residents for evacuation. The fulfillment of materials for inhabitants is necessary. Children need enough manpower for care. As a team member helping each other in a disaster event, it is important to interact with each other from the normal time for residents to know about children's disabilities.