Exploring the Needs of Foreign Parents in the A Prefecture
— From interviews with foreign parents, public service providers, and supporters —

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the difficulties and the needs experienced by foreign parents who are raising young children in Japan. It also aims to find out their sources of social support and the use of social services for child-rearing. Three focus group interview sessions were conducted with 13 foreign parents living in the A prefecture. Interviews were also conducted with six public service providers and three professionals who provide supportive services for foreign residents in the community. Transcribed data were coded and summarized into categories and sub-categories. The results revealed a range of difficulties experienced by foreign parents including language problems, children’s education and school related problems, intergenerational conflicts, economic issues, problems related to employment and child-care, lack of information, lack of social support, anxiety in child-rearing, and so on. Family members and friends from the same countries were found to be the most important source of support for most parents, although some parents found support from Japanese neighbors more useful because of geological distance from their families and friends. Most parents utilized basic social services for parents and children. However, there were discrepancies in their perception of the language problem between parents and public service providers.

Key Words: foreign residents in Japan, needs of parents in child-rearing, support for child-rearing