

PLAZA NEWSLETTER(February 2026)

The year 2026 (Reiwa 8) has begun. We are very pleased to have safely welcomed the New Year. We look forward to your continued support this year. This year is the Year of the Horse. Among the twelve zodiac animals, the horse is considered auspicious as a symbol of growth, success, and prosperity. This year is also known as the “Year of Leaps and Bounds,” inspired by the horse. Just as horses charge forward with strength and vigor, We hope we can all maintain a positive and lighthearted spirit throughout the year. We sincerely hope this newsletter continues to offer you hints and inspiration in the coming year.

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the Kumamoto City International Center will be closed from Tuesday, January 27, 2026, to Friday, March 6, 2026. However, the Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents will continue to provide consultation services via phone, email, and online. Please feel free to contact us.

Consultation hours are from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. ※Please note that these hours differ from the usual consultation hours. If you have any questions, please contact us.

Now allow us to partially introduce the consultation details found in our plaza. We received 38 consultations in December and have shared below examples of questions and answers. Some content has been edited for privacy concerns.

Q : 2 years ago, I quit my job for personal reasons. I want to apply for unemployment benefits, but my previous employer said they couldn't provide a copy of the separation notice because they had already given me the original. Can I apply for unemployment benefits without the separation notice?

A : Hello Work has confirmed that the employment separation notice to submit must be the original document. (Copies are not acceptable.) Additionally, the benefit period lasts for one year after leaving your job. Reissuance of the employment separation notice is possible through your former employer or Hello Work which is faster. Obtain it from either source when needed. If you have not yet found new employment, you can begin the benefit application process immediately after receiving the employment separation notice.

Q : I am currently taking a temporary leave from work due to poor health (unpaid status). I hold a Technical/Humanities/International Services residence status and am enrolled in social insurance. I would like to apply for sickness allowance.

A : We contacted the National Health Insurance Association and assisted with filling out the “Sickness Allowance Payment Application Form.” There are several conditions for receiving sickness allowance. (You must have been absent from work for 4 days or more, be undergoing treatment for an illness or injury and unable to work, and not be receiving wages from your employer, etc.) For detailed information, please scan the QR code on the right. You can view it in multiple languages.

National Health Insurance Association website



If you have any problems, please contact the Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents.

Report on the 4th Free Consultation Session for Foreign Residents

On Sunday, November 16, 2025, we held the 4th free consultation session for foreign residents. On this day, 17 people from 9 countries attended, with most seeking advice on two or more areas. The most common inquiries were about employment, followed by immigration and legal matters. Employment consultations, in particular, filled up almost immediately, forcing us to close registration early. Many had some understanding of Japanese, but they preferred consultations through an interpreter. I believe this allowed them to consult with peace of mind, free from worries like “What if I can’t communicate properly?”

This year, for the first time, staff from the Kumamoto Pension Office also attended and provided consultations on pension matters. Those seeking advice asked questions enthusiastically about their pension concerns and how to receive lump-sum withdrawal payments.

Nearly all participants expressed that they were glad they came for counseling and that it helped resolve their issues. About one-third of them were unaware of the Plaza beforehand, but we hope this counseling session will encourage them to contact us again should they encounter any difficulties in the future.





Minimum wage

The minimum wage is the lowest amount of pay an employer must pay to workers. It applies to all workers, regardless of whether they are full-time employees, part-time workers, or others. There are two types of minimum wages:

- ① “Regional minimum wages” set by each prefecture,
- ② “Specific (industry-specific) minimum wages” set for particular industries.

If the industry of the workplace where you are employed falls under category ②, the amount for ② applies. If it does not fall under category ②, the amount for ① applies.

The specific industries covered in Kumamoto are: electronic components, devices, and electronic circuits, electrical machinery and equipment, information and communications machinery and equipment manufacturing (¥1,063); automobile and automobile parts manufacturing, shipbuilding and repair, marine engine manufacturing (¥1,074); department stores and general supermarkets (¥1,034).

The minimum wage is determined by the Minimum Wage Council based on factors such as actual survey results, and employers are required to inform workers of the minimum wage.

The regional minimum wage in Kumamoto increased to 1,034 yen on January 1, 2026. (Overtime pay, holiday pay, bonuses, etc., are excluded.) Make sure you receive fair wages.



Information on Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents (Temporary changes to opening hours and consultation methods)

The Kumamoto City International Center will be closed for electrical equipment renovation work from Tuesday, January 27 to Friday, March 6. During this period, the Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents will suspend in-person consultations. Consultations will be available by phone, email, or online. Additionally, consultation hours will change to 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM during this period.

February Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01 • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese	02	03 • Chinese Consultation	04 • Immigrational Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation	05 • Korean Consultation	06 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation • Spanish Consultation	07
08 • Immigrational Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • Educational Consultation	09 closed	10 • Chinese Consultation	11 National Day • Mental Health Counseling • Tagalog Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese	12 • Korean Consultation	13 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	14
15 • Immigrational Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Nepal Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese	16	17 • Chinese Consultation	18 • Housing Consultation • Vietnamese Consultation • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation • Life Consultation in Taiwanese	19 • Korean Consultation	20 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	21 • Life Consultation in Chinese • Free Legal Consultation
22 • Educational Consultation • Life Consultation in Taiwanese	23 The Emperor's Birthday	24 closed	25 • Life Consultation in Chinese • German Consultation • One-stop Consultation Service for International Students	26 • Korean Consultation (13:30-17:00)	27 • Life Consultation in Chinese • English Consultation	28
Note: Consultations 1:00pm~5:00pm (apart from the ones below) • Immigrational Consultation 1:00pm~4:00pm • Mental Health Counseling 3:00pm~5:00pm • Free Legal Consultation 2:00pm~4:00pm (Reservation required) • Educational Consultation 10:00am~3:00pm • One-stop Consultation Service for International Students 1:00pm~4:00pm						

※ Consultation service could be cancelled due to consultant's personal reasons.
Please e-mail or call us beforehand to check if the consultant is available.

Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents' Facebook

We regularly update information useful to you.

Follow us and be one of the first one to be informed!



Plaza's FB

We are offering variety of information useful to your life. Please check us!



Our website



Our Life affairs guidance

Kumamoto Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents

Location: 2nd floor of Kumamoto City International Center

Address: 4-18 Hanabata-Cho, Chuo-Ku, Kumamoto City, 860-0806

Tel: 096-359-4995

E-mail: soudan@kumamoto-if.or.jp

Opening hours: Between 10 am and 6 pm

Closed on second and fourth Mondays and between December 29 and January 3

★ If second or fourth Monday is a national holiday, the plaza will be closed the following day instead.

