

Introduction of the National Certification System for ‘Childcare Specialists’— Nationally Certified Childcare Experts

- In April, a total of 49 statutes, including the Child Care Support Act, will come into effect.

Starting in April, various measures will be introduced to enhance the quality of people’s lives and strengthen the social safety net—such as the introduction of the childcare specialist certification system, stricter penalties for drugged driving, customs duty exemptions for medicines for rare and intractable diseases, and the promotion of the wellness tourism industry. The Ministry of Government Legislation (Minister Cho Won-cheol) announced that a total of 49 laws and regulations will take effect this April. Some of the key details and enforcement dates of the forthcoming statutes are as follows.

Introducing the National Certification System for ‘Childcare Specialist’ (Child Care Support Act, April 23)

A national certification system will be introduced to improve the expertise and reliability of the childcare workforce. Moving forward, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family will grant the "childcare specialist" qualification to individuals who complete the training courses prescribed by law, possess certain qualifications, and pass aptitude and personality assessment. Those already employed as childcare providers at the time of this Act’s enforcement will be

recognized as having obtained the childcare specialist qualification under the revised regulations. Additionally, new regulations will prevent individuals with diseases that pose a risk of harm to others from working as childcare specialists or as childcare providers at registered childcare service institutions. With pre-employment criminal background checks becoming available, the childcare personnel will be more strictly verified.

Stricter Penalties for Drugged Driving (Road Traffic Act, April 2)

To prevent drug-impaired driving accidents, the punishment for drug-impaired driving and refusal to undergo testing will be strengthened. If police officers suspect drug-impaired driving, they may conduct simple reagent tests to determine drugged driving and those who refuse such testing may be subject to up to 5 years of imprisonment or a fine of up to 20 million won. The punishment for drug-impaired driving will also be strengthened from up to 3 years of imprisonment or a fine of 10 million won to up to 5 years of imprisonment or a fine of 20 million won. Additionally, if a person causes a traffic accident while driving under the influence of drugs, he or she cannot obtain a driver's license for 2 years; if a person fails to take necessary measures or report the accident after injuring a person, or causes a fatality, the period extends to 5 years. And those who refuse drug testing or commit a repeat offense within 10 years of a prior conviction for drugged driving will be subject to aggravated punishment.

Customs Duty Exemption for Medicines for Rare and Intractable Diseases (Customs Act, April 1)

Customs duty exemptions for medications used to treat rare and

intractable diseases will be expanded. Previously, customs duty exemptions were granted for some medicines under relevant laws, but this did not apply to the import of "medicines for self-treatment" that are not distributed domestically. Accordingly, rare and intractable disease patients who imported "medicines for self-treatment" not distributed in Korea through the Korea Orphan & Essential Drug Center had to bear the customs duties in addition to the price of the medicine. However, from now on, customs duties in such cases will be exempted, reducing the burden on rare and intractable disease patients.

Boosting the Wellness Tourism Industry (Act on the Promotion of the Wellness Tourism Industry, April 9)

Various measures will be prepared to foster wellness tourism that enhances public health and the quality of life as a high-value-added industry at the government level by utilizing tangible and intangible resources such as landscapes, hot springs, food, and barefoot walking. The Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism may designate specialized organizations for supporting the wellness tourism industry, promote R&D, and generate professional personnel. Furthermore, the Minister will lay the foundation for the systematic fostering of the healing tourism industry by introducing a registration system for wellness tourism businesses and a certification system for excellent facilities.

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