

ACRC Korea Transparency Newsletter (Dec. 2024)

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ACRC Announced 2024 Comprehensive Integrity Assessment Results for Public Institutions

- *Jeollanam-do Boseong County, Chungcheongnam-do Buyeo County, and Seoul Guro District achieved Comprehensive Integrity Level 1 Grade for three consecutive years*
- *For the first time, a full-scale evaluation of 243 local councils was conducted this year... The average comprehensive integrity score for local councils was 69.2, lower than that of administrative agencies and public officials-related organizations (80.3)*
- *The internal corruption experience rate of local governments is 2.18%, and the experience rate of unjust work handling demands by local councils is 19.38%... Efforts are needed to eradicate corruption and improve integrity on the local field*

(19, December. 2024, ACRC)

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) announced today the results of the ‘2024 Comprehensive Integrity Assessment of Public Institutions,’ which comprehensively measures and evaluates the integrity level of 716 public institutions.

The Comprehensive Integrity Assessment results were derived by combining ▲ ‘Perceived Integrity,’ based on survey results from approximately 300,000 participants, including civil petitioners with experience working with public institutions (approximately 210,000) and internal officials (approximately 85,000); ▲ ‘Integrity Effort,’ evaluating the anti-corruption efforts pursued by institutions over the year; and ▲ ‘Corruption Status Assessment,’ which deducts points for corruption incidents.“

Assessment Results of Administrative Agencies and Public Service-Related Organizations

First, all five types of institutions, including central administrative agencies (46), metropolitan governments (17), basic local governments (226), education offices (17), and public service-related organizations (154), had a Comprehensive Integrity Level that was the same as or higher than the previous year.

However, the average Comprehensive Integrity score for the total of 460 institutions in 2024 was 80.3 points, reflecting a decrease of 0.2 points compared to the previous year. This decline was influenced by the reduction in the number of evaluation targets for public service-related organizations, which generally have a relatively high integrity level.

Looking by type, while the Integrity Effort scores increased across all institution types, some types saw a decrease in their Perceived Integrity scores, with basic local governments seeing particularly notable decline in their Perceived Integrity scores.

< Comprehensive Integrity Scores by Institution Type and Scores by Each Assessment Area (points, change from a year earlier) >

Category	Comprehensive Integrity Score	Perceived Integrity	Integrity Effort
All (460)	80.3 (▼0.2)	79.2 (▼0.8)	83.5 (▲1.3)
Central Admin. Agency (46)	80.9 (▲0.2)	81.1 (▲0.5)	82.8 (▲0.3)
Metropolitan government (17)	78.7 (▲0.1)	77.5 (▲0.3)	83.0 (▲1.0)
Basic local government (226)	77.1 (▲0.2)	75.6 (▼0.9)	81.1 (▲2.6)
Education office (17)	83.4 (▲1.3)	79.4 (-)	89.4 (▲0.5)
Public service-related org. (154)	84.6 (-)	84.0 (▼0.3)	86.7 (▲0.8)

By institution, there are 18 (3.9%) institutions that achieved a Comprehensive Integrity Level 1, an increase of 2 institutions from the previous year. Among these, three have maintained a Comprehensive Integrity Level 1 for three consecutive years: Jeollanam-do Boseong County, Chungcheongnam-do Buyeo County, and Seoul Guro District. There were no institutions that achieved a Level 1 in the 'Perceived Integrity' category for three consecutive years, while in the 'Integrity Effort' category, the National Health Insurance Corporation achieved Level 1 for three consecutive years.

Out of 460 institutions, 137 (29.8%) experienced an upgrade in their ratings compared to the previous year, while 133 (28.9%) saw a decline. Among these, 20 institutions (4.3%) such as the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries and Gyeongsangnam-do moved up two levels, and Gangwon Yangyang County went up three levels compared to the previous year.

Perceived integrity scores decreased by 0.8 points to 79.2, with public officials' evaluations of internal integrity dropping significantly (-2.5 points). The declines were especially notable in basic local governments (-4.1 points), education offices (-1.9 points), and metropolitan governments (-1.7 points). The rate at which civil petitioners experienced corruption in the process of work handled by public institution decreased to 0.4%, down from the previous year (-0.02 percentage points), whereas the rate of public officials experiencing corruption in internal work procedures increased to 2.18%, an increase of +0.19 percentage points from the previous year.

Additionally, the scores for the category of standard procedure violation in personnel affairs significantly deteriorated, indicating an urgent need to establish measures to eradicate corrupt practices within organizational operations.

The 'Integrity Efforts' score rose by 1.3 points to 83.5, indicating that various institutions operated systematic anti-corruption policies with consideration of

evaluation criteria. Notably, basic local governments showed the most significant increase for two consecutive years (from 75.9 points in 2022 to 78.5 points in 2023, then to 81.1 points in 2024).

Furthermore, the results from the ‘Leadership Interest and Effort’ indicator in the Integrity Efforts category were analyzed to have a positive correlation with the Comprehensive Integrity Level, suggesting that ongoing interest and effort from high-ranking officials, including heads of institutions, are necessary for the long-term and sustained improvement of integrity levels.

Meanwhile, among the institutions that received anti-corruption consulting from the ACRC, 18 out of 22 institutions with Comprehensive Integrity Levels of 4 and 5 from the previous year saw their ratings increase. Particularly, four institutions — Gangwon Gangneung City, Jeollabuk-do Sunchang County, Gyeongsangbuk-do Education Office, and the Korea Creative Content Agency — significantly raised their Comprehensive Integrity Levels by two levels or more through consulting support by the ACRC.

Evaluation Results of Public Medical Institutions and Local Councils

Public medical institutions (13) and local councils (243) were evaluated using a separate assessment model due to their unique characteristics and nature of work, differing from administrative agencies and public service-related organizations.

The Comprehensive Integrity score of the 13 public medical institutions is 79.6 points, while the score for the 243 local councils is 69.2 points, which is lower than that of administrative agencies and public service-related organizations (80.3 points).

For public medical institutions, the Perceived Integrity score is 78.9 points, and the Integrity Effort score is 86.8 points. Among the 13 institutions evaluated, 2 saw an increase in their Comprehensive Integrity Level compared to the previous year, while 6 experienced a decline.

The Perceived Integrity score, evaluated by citizens who had experience with public medical institutions (contracting, consultations, etc.), is 88.2 points, while the internal integrity score evaluated by the institution's officials is lower at 58.5 points. The score difference of 29.7 points is the largest among all types, and the rate of corruption experience for internal integrity (1.97%) was significantly higher than that for external integrity (0.22%).

Members of public medical institutions particularly rated the internal integrity sub-items 'providing preferential treatment to specific individuals due to personal connections' (51.1 points) and 'acts of power abuse such as unreasonable demands, instructions, and refusals' (54.1 points) very low, with the 'power abuse' item consistently recording the lowest score among all institution types this year, following the previous year.

The main cause of the occurrence of power abuse was identified as 'lack of willingness to improve among superiors, including executives' (28.2%), indicating a need for efforts to promote policies that internal members can resonate with.

The comprehensive integrity assessments of all 243 local councils were conducted for the first time this year. Among the metropolitan councils (17) and basic city councils (75) that were evaluated last year, the councils of Dongducheon City in Gyeonggi Province and Donghae City in Gangwon Province have maintained a Comprehensive Integrity Level 1 for two consecutive years, while the Suwon City Council in Gyeonggi Province saw its integrity level rise by three levels.

The Perceived Integrity score as evaluated by local government officials, employees of subsidiary agencies, and local residents is 67.4 points. The Perceived Integrity consists of the ‘Legislative Activity’ and ‘Council Management’ categories, with the ‘Legislative Activity’ area (66.5 points), measuring the extent to which affairs are handled transparently and fairly without solicitation or requests, being lower than the ‘Council Management’ area (68.9 points), which measures appropriateness in budget execution and organizational/personnel management.

The rate of corruption experience in the Legislative Activity area worsened in all categories compared to the previous year, specifically noting that the experience rate of ‘unreasonable work requests exceeding authority’ increased significantly to 19.38% compared to last year (an increase of 4.96 percentage points in metropolitan councils and 2.13 percentage points in basic city councils), indicating that efforts are still needed to enhance integrity levels in local settings.

The Integrity Efforts score of the 243 local councils is 77.8 points, which is notably lower in basic councils (76.7 points) compared to metropolitan councils (92.7 points).

In particular, the score difference for the ‘enhancement of the enforcement capability of the conflict of interest prevention system’ indicator (34.3 points) is the largest. Given that among the lowest-rated items in the social awareness of corruption in basic councils was ‘compliance with the obligation to avoid conflicts of interest’ (65.4 points), efforts are needed to establish a system that ensures the obligation to avoid conflicts of interest is properly adhered to when such situations arise during legislative activities.

The results of the comprehensive integrity evaluation will be disclosed to the public through the ACRC and its websites. Additionally, for areas identified as

vulnerable to corruption by citizens and public officials, each institution will promptly prepare and implement improvement measures.

Lee Myung-soon, Vice chairperson of the ACRC, said, "The results of the continuous efforts to improve areas vulnerable to corruption and anti-corruption in the public sector have emerged as an increase in integrity efforts. However, measures are needed due to the increasing corruption experience rate in internal integrity among local governments and councils."

He further added, "As the overarching anti-corruption control tower, the ACRC will continue to support the autonomous implementation of anti-corruption integrity policies by public institutions and the improvement of national integrity levels.

ACRC Ensures the Devotion of Young Soldiers Who Fought in the Korean War is Not Forgotten

- ACRC expressed opinions that "there must be continuous verification of the existence of child soldiers, establishment of memorial and commemorative facilities, enshrinement of their tablets, and the provision of exhibition spaces" to the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

(10, December, 2024, ACRC)

An opinion that efforts must continue to ensure that the devotion of child soldiers who participated in the Korean War at an age under 18 is not forgotten has been expressed.

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) expressed its opinion to government agencies, including the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, to take measures to honor and recognize these child soldiers in response to a civil petition for grievance raised by Lee Gyu-won, a head of a dental clinic who operates the ‘Incheon Memorial of Korean War Student Troops.’

ACRC previously advised the Minister of National Defense to investigate and confirm the existence of child soldiers based on the civil petition for grievance raised by the Association of the Korean War Child Soldiers in 2008, to accurately record their military service and deaths, and to request the Minister of Veterans Affairs to enshrine the tablets of deceased child soldiers and erect memorial facilities such as the Patriotic Martyrs’ Tower to honor their memories.

Dr. Lee Gyu-won, whose father was a child soldier during the Korean War, raised concerns that there has been insufficient attention and effort towards recognizing the sacrifices of these child soldiers, urging for the excavation, documentation, and research of the child soldiers' participation history, and for the establishment of a memorial and commemorative museum for child soldiers to ensure they are not forgotten.

ACRC received a list of 42 fallen child soldiers from the Incheon region, which Dr. Lee has collected and discovered for over nearly 30 years, along with supporting documentation, and conducted fact-finding investigations with the relevant institutions.

Although the participation and deaths of the 42 child soldiers whose documents were submitted by Dr. Lee were confirmed through military records held by the Army and Navy, as well as information managed by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, the National Cemetery, the Military History Institute, and the War Memorial, only 8 out of these were officially recorded regarding their participation as child soldiers.

Additionally, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs has been building memorials for veterans (national heroes) in local governments and schools each year since 2016, and as of 2023, a total of 58 memorials have been established in elementary, middle, and high schools. Among these, there are some memorials considering types of war participation such as 'fallen student volunteer forces and student soldiers,' but no memorial for child soldiers has been found.

Furthermore, ACRC pointed out the fact that of the 42 child soldiers submitted by Dr. Lee, 5 were either not enshrined at the National Cemetery or were registered under different names, and that a list of fallen child soldiers identified until that time was attached to the appendix of the book 'Research on Child Soldiers in the Korean War' published by the Military

History Institute in 2011, but only 14 of these were listed, while the others were omitted. ACRC also noted that there is currently no exhibition space for fallen child soldiers at the War Memorial.

In response, ACRC expressed its opinion to the Minister of National Defense to continue the work of correcting military records through verification of the existence of all child soldiers, including the list submitted by Dr. Lee, and to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to actively establish memorial and commemorative facilities to honor the contributions and sacrifices of child soldiers by recording their participation.

The Commission also recommended that the Director of the National Seoul Cemetery actively promote the enshrinement of tablets for child soldiers who have not yet been registered and that the Director of the Military History Institute revise the list of child soldiers who lost their lives included in the book 'Research on Child Soldiers in the Korean War' and re-post it on their website while periodically updating it; and also requested the president of the War Memorial Association to establish exhibition space for child soldiers within the War Memorial.

Park Jong-min, the Vice-chairperson for Grievance Handling and Secretariat of the ACRC, stated, "It is the nation's rightful duty to provide appropriate respect to the child soldiers who devoted themselves to the country at a young age without descendants. We will continue to work actively to ensure that measures for honoring and recognizing the child soldiers are properly implemented."

Even the Costs for Issuing University Electronic Certificates are a Burden When It is Hard to Find a Job

- ACRC recommends public and national universities and the Ministry of Education to ease the burden of issuing electronic certificates from universities... There should be management of the format and costs of issuing electronic certificates to reduce the burden on job seekers.

(12, December. 2024, ACRC)

The costs incurred by young people when obtaining electronic certificates from universities for job preparation or external activities are expected to decrease.

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) prepared a "Plan to Ease the Burden of Issuing University Electronic Certificates" on the 9th of this month and recommended it to public and national universities and the Ministry of Education.

The ACRC 2030 Advisory Group*noted that after the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in current students and job seekers obtaining certificates such as enrollment and graduation certificates online. However, they expressed significant burden due to the need to obtain multiple copies depending on the submitting institution, thus requesting institutional improvements to redress this issue.

* The 2030 Advisory Group, operated by the ACRC, consists of 20 individuals in their 20s and 30s from various backgrounds, including university students, education and social welfare workers, and company employees, to reflect the voices of youth in anti-corruption policy formulation and propose innovative policy ideas for young people.

【(Table) Current Status of University Electronic Certificate Issuance Costs
(Oct. 2024, ACRC Survey)】

	Student Fee for Issuing Electronic Certificates						Total
	Not in operation	0 KRW	~ 1,000 KRW	~ 2,000 KRW	~ 3,000 KRW	More than 3,000 KRW	
Public/National Univ.	2	2	1	4	17	1	27
Private Univ.	0	1	1	1	1	11	15

Unlike paper certificates, electronic certificates require specifying the submitting company or institution, leading to the inconvenience and cost burden of having to obtain electronic certificates from each institution.

Additionally, the validity period for electronic certificates is approximately 3 months, requiring renewed certificates each quarter for employment or external activities.

【(Reference) Example of Graduation Certificate Issuance】



In response, the ACRC recommended public and national universities to allow electronic certificates to be issued with only the purpose of submission, such as ‘for company submission,’ without requiring the entry of the place of use, and to extend the current validity period of electronic certificates beyond 3 months to reduce the cost burden for students and graduates.

Furthermore, at the level of the Ministry of Education, ACRC also recommended guidelines on the format and costs of issuing electronic certificates for public and national universities should be established.

For private universities, the Ministry of Education is also expected to create guidelines or share best practices from public and national universities to manage the issuance format of electronic certificates and reduce the costs incurred by current students and graduates.

The Vice Chairperson for Grievance Handling and Secretariat of the ACRC, Park Jong-min, said, "As youth unemployment continues, we expect that this system improvement will reduce the cost burden for university certificates needed for external activities or employment."

Launch of Government Civil Complaint Call Center Service Utilizing Private Cloud and AI Technology

- *ACRC has fully opened a government-wide integrated call center system based on private cloud technology for 17 government ministries*
- *Utilizing AI for real-time analysis of counseling content provides customized advice to counselors, offering swift and accurate counseling services to citizens*

(27, December. 2024, ACRC)

A service that integrates the civil complaint call center systems of 17 government ministries is officially launching to provide citizens with quicker and more accurate government civil complaint guidance services.

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) has completed the construction of the government-wide integrated call center system and opened it today.

This construction project was conducted using private resource-sharing (cloud) technology and artificial intelligence to enable civil complainants to receive swift and accurate counseling services regarding government civil complaints.

The Commission, in collaboration with 17 institutions, completed this two-year project that began in 2023 and starts the integrated service of the call center systems for the 17 government ministries this December.

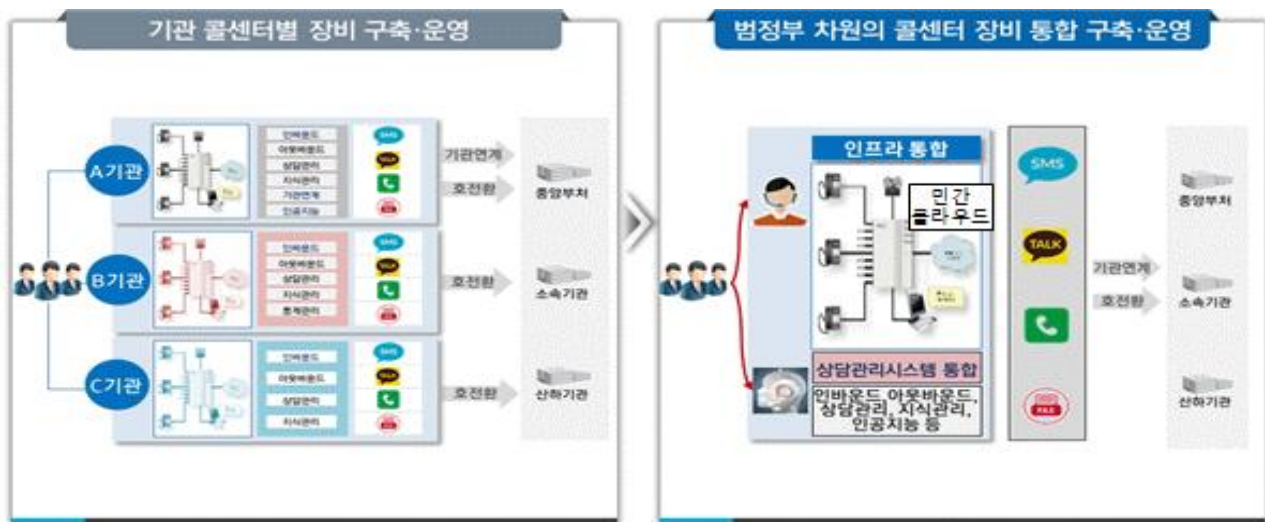
* (17 Integrating Institutions): Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Personnel Management, Ministry of Veterans Affairs,

Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism,
 Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Korea National Statistical Office

Previously, each government ministry established and operated its own call center system, which raised issues of budget waste, long waiting times for calls, and inconveniences such as having to re-explain consultation content.

In contrast, the government-wide integrated call center system moved away from the previously independent server operation approach of each institution and utilized private resource-sharing (cloud) technology for the first time in government call centers to address these issues.

【Concept of Government-Wide Integrated Call Center】



In the past, when citizens needed to re-consult with advisors from different institutions, they had to re-explain their issues. However, with the shared use of the integrated system, data sharing, such as consultation content between institutions, becomes possible, greatly enhancing accessibility and convenience for citizens.

Furthermore, by introducing the "AI Advisor"* feature, citizens can receive faster and more accurate guidance services.

- * This AI technology analyzes the voice of the citizen and advisor in real-time to recommend appropriate responses and consultation knowledge to the advisor.

For this project, 22,875 standard consultation cases from 17 institutions were structured into data. During a phone consultation, the system automatically provides advisors with tailored cases that correspond to the intentions of the questioner, enabling advisors to conduct consultations more easily and conveniently.

Additionally, compared to the previous approach where 17 ministries separately built and operated systems, shared use of the integrated system is expected to result in a budget savings of 84.6 billion KRW.

- * Individual system construction integration and shared use of unified systems resulted in total savings of **84.2 billion KRW**
- * **Annual economic benefits** including reduced consultation time through integrated operation and AI introduction amount to **4 billion KRW**

At the opening ceremony, attended by over 40 people including Ryu Chul-whan of the ACRC, officials from 17 institutions, the Korea Intelligent Information Society Agency, and the young reporters of the Commission, attendees also visited consultation rooms of Citizen Call 110 and the Meteorological Administration to observe the consultation sites and encourage the advisors.

ACRC chairperson Ryu Chul-whan expressed gratitude to everyone involved in dismantling the barriers between ministries and building the government-wide

integrated call center system over the past two years and hoped that the quality of civil complaint consultation services would improve and inter-ministerial cooperation would be strengthened in the future.

He further stated, "Since government call centers serve as the frontline communication channels with the public, I'd like to call for their attentive listening to the voices of the citizens and contribution to connect government policies to alleviate the difficulties faced by the people at the forefront."

"I Raise Two Kids, So I Worked Reduced Hours"... **Discrimination in Salary Step Recognition to be prohibited**

- ACRC states its opinion that "a daycare center teacher who has reduced her working hours for childcare should not face discrimination in salary step recognition"

- "All periods of parental leave should be acknowledged as career" vs. "In the case of reduced work hours, only if working more than 6 hours, they shall be recognized as one day's work"...raising an issue of "equity"

(17, December. 2024, ACRC)

It has been determined that those who reduce their working hours for childcare should not face disadvantages in salary step calculations.

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) expressed its opinion to the Ministry of Education that the criteria for calculating salary steps for a daycare center teacher who has worked reduced hours for childcare are unreasonable and should be revised.

The applicant worked as a teacher at a daycare center within the ○○District Office and reduced her hours to 4 hours a day for two years to raise her two children.

According to the Ministry of Education's "Guidelines for Childcare Services," only those who work more than 6 hours a day while reducing working hours for childcare are recognized as having worked for a day in the current salary step system. If working less than 6 hours, only the actual hours worked are recognized as career.

In this regard, the teacher at a daycare center filed a complaint for grievances with the ACRC, stating that it is unfair to recognize a work day only when she works more than 6 hours because she is working reduced hours for childcare.

The Commission found that, according to Article 19-2, Paragraph 5 of the "Equal Employment Opportunity and Support for Work-Life Balance Act," workers should not receive unfavorable treatment due to the reduction of working hours for childcare. In addition, teachers who take parental leave are having the periods of their leave fully counted as work experience. However, for those like the complainant who reduced their working hours for childcare, only those who work more than 6 hours a day can have the day recognized as one day work experience, raising concerns about fairness.

Therefore, the Commission has advised the Ministry of Education to revise the criteria for salary step recognition to allow childcare teachers who have worked reduced hours to have their work days recognized as one day work experience regardless of the number of hours worked.

The Vice Chairperson for Grievance Handling and Secretariat of the ACRC, Park Jong-min, said, "This institutional improvement is to ensure that workers who reduce their work hours for childcare do not face disadvantages in the calculation of work experience," adding that "We hope workers can use reduced working hours for childcare with more peace of mind in the years to come."