

AAA Respite Guide

For Caregivers and Providers



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

**Developed by Texas Health and
Human Services Commission**

2025

Table of Contents

1. Overview of Respite	1
What is Respite Used For?	1
Who is Eligible for Respite?	2
Who is not eligible to receive Respite?	2
2. Respite Application Process.....	3
Summary of Responsibilities	3
How to Use the Voucher?	4
Interviewing and Selection of Providers	5
Appendix A.....	9
Care Receiver Information Sheet	9

1. Overview of Respite

Temporary relief for caregivers is commonly known as respite. It is defined as taking a break from the responsibilities of caring for a person with special needs. Respite support may be used by caregivers to:

- Visit with family and friends;
- Spend a leisurely evening at dinner or the movies;
- Have their loved one experience a community outing while they remain at home; or
- Take a weekend or weeklong vacation.

Respite comes in various forms and occurs in many settings. It may take place in the caregiver's home, the home of another, in a community setting, such as a childcare center or church. A caregiver might choose to hire their own respite provider or merely exchange duties with another caregiver who has a loved one with special needs.

Respite can range from a few hours a day to a week or more. Where respite occurs, the length of time depends on the needs of the family and the availability of resources. While respite is generally planned, emergency respite is sometimes needed.

What is Respite Used For?

Quality respite can benefit caregivers in the following ways:

- Allows spouses to spend more time together;
- Gives caregivers a chance to spend time with their children and other family members;
- Reduces stress on the entire family and increases opportunities to relax together;
- Enables caregivers to take care of their own needs; and
- Helps the special needs person to develop leisure and social skills by meeting and spending time with others.

Who is Eligible for Respite?

The respite voucher program provides funds to families to assist in obtaining respite care for a family member who has special needs.

- Grandparents raising grandchildren or other relatives as parents (in accordance with requirements of the NFCSP –of an AAA’s allocation may be spent on this group for all services; grandparent aged 60+; grandchild aged 18 or younger (priority given to those raising children with developmental disabilities or intellectual disability);
- Spouses caring for a spouse over the age of 60 with dementia or chronic health problems who have deficits in at least two activities of daily living (ADLs);
- Adult children caring for a parent over the age of 60; or
- Other adults caring for a relative or friend over the age of 60.

Who is not eligible to receive Respite?

Persons who are receiving a similar service under another program (e.g., Medicaid waiver program such as STAR+PLUS HCBS or Community Living Assistance and Support Services). In addition, a caregiver that is paid to provide caregiving services.

2. Respite Application Process

You may request an application by contacting your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA):

AAA: <<Insert AAA name>>

Telephone: <<Insert AAA phone number>>

Address: <<Insert AAA address>>

E-mail Address: <<Insert AAA email>>

Do not use any part of this guide as an application. You must complete the application provided by the AAA.

Summary of Responsibilities

The **caregiver** is the individual who is providing care on a regular, ongoing basis (often 7 days a week, 24 hours a day). The **care receiver** is the individual who needs respite services while the caregiver takes a break. The caregiver has the responsibility of:

- Interviewing potential respite provider(s);
- Discussing and setting an hourly, daily or weekly rate;
- Selecting and hiring the respite provider. Caregivers may choose a family member, neighbor, friend, adult care center, private agency staff, or contact the AAA for assistance. Selected providers must be 18 years of age or older;

A respite provider may not be a family member who is a spouse, legal guardian, or lives in the same house as the person needing respite services. In addition, by hiring the respite provider, the caregiver assumes all liability. The AAA will be held harmless from any problems that result from the actions of the selected respite provider.

- Asking for and checking references;
- Informing or training the provider of the specific needs of the family member;

- Ensuring proper payment for services by: keeping track of the number of hours or days of respite used and the total amount claimed against the voucher;
- Ensuring that federal tax guidelines are followed in accordance with IRS Publication 926 if:
 - The provider is not employed by a respite agency, or
 - \$2,800 or more is paid to a single provider who provides services at the care receiver's home ([see IRS Publication 926](#)), or
- Accepting liability for respite care providers whom you employ.
- This includes:
 - Liability for negligent acts or omissions by the employee, an
 - Liability related to any employee injuries.
- Appealing any decision through the AAA that denied a respite voucher;
- Notifying the AAA of any change of address;
- Monitoring the quality of the respite services provided; and
- Notifying the AAA of any dissatisfaction with a respite provider. This will help the AAA monitor the quality of the providers listed in the Respite Provider Registry.

How to Use the Voucher?

After a caregiver has completed the application and the AAA has determined eligibility, a phone call or letter will inform them whether you have been approved. Applications are approved upon funding availability and could take two months or more. The caregiver may be contacted for an appointment to assess the care receiver to determine deficits in two activities of daily living. Upon approval, the caregiver may receive voucher(s) for use. The vouchers will come with instructions for how they should be used.

- The caregiver will negotiate the hourly, daily or weekly rate with the respite provider. Choose a provider and set the amount.
- The provider completes the amount claimed and signs the voucher.
- The caregiver completes all remaining information, signs the voucher and submits it to the AAA for payment.

The voucher is mailed to:

<<Insert AAA address>>

Caregivers will be responsible for all costs above the maximum amount authorized. Caregivers using respite vouchers are subject to random audits to ensure that funds are used for respite services and for no other purpose.

Report lost vouchers to <<Insert AAA name, address, & phone number>>.

If you need any assistance completing the application or have any questions about the respite voucher program, contact <<Insert AAA name, & phone number>>.

Most families have someone in mind to provide the respite care. If you do not, the following might be helpful.

There are several different ways for parents or caregivers to locate or develop respite resources.

- Contact local interest groups such as senior citizens centers, Alzheimer's Associations, churches;
- Obtain referrals from friends, relatives, associates;
- Contact <<Insert AAA name & phone number>>.

Interviewing and Selection of Providers

The following sections are designed to help you interview a potential respite provider. This includes tips on what to look for when you visit an out-of-home setting, what to ask and things to discuss with prospective respite providers.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-HOME RESPITE PROVIDERS

The following questions may help caregivers determine whether or not a prospective respite provider is acceptable for their loved one:

- Tell me about your training and experience as a respite provider.
- What type of care will you provide?
- What would you do if emergency care were needed?
- What would you do if you found him/her with an open bottle that you thought contained poison or medicine?
- How would you encourage him/her to cooperate with you? What would you do if he/she refused to cooperate with you?

- How should we communicate about issues? What should we do if we disagree about something?
- What hours are you available to work?
- What about holidays and weekends?
- What would you do if you had to leave because of a personal emergency?
- What would you do if you were unable to come to work?
- Are you able or willing to provide transportation?
- Can you provide references from other families with whom you have worked?
- Do you have a criminal background check and driving record available for review?

QUESTIONS FOR OUT-OF-HOME RESPITE PROVIDERS

In addition to the questions asked of in-home respite providers, the following questions may be helpful when interviewing out-of-home respite providers:

- Describe or show me your home or facility.
- What is the daily routine? Do you have planned activities?
- How many respite providers will be available to care for him/her?
- How will you communicate with him/her?
- What will he/she love about the place?
- Would there be anyone around him/her who might be sick?
- Will trips be made into the community?
- If so, how is transportation handled?
- If he/she needs assistance with toileting, how will this be handled for privacy?
- Who will be responsible?
- What is the mealtime routine?
- How will you ensure his/her safety?

Important Discussion Points

- Explain what type of duties you expect the respite provider to perform.
- Discuss the amount of respite you need.
- What type of training will the respite provider need?
- Does the provider know CPR/First Aid?
- Discuss what types of discipline are acceptable.
- Is more formal training needed? If so, contact the AAA for additional information.

ENVIRONMENTAL / SAFETY QUESTIONS FOR OUT-OF-HOME RESPITE

Mobility Issues

- Are doors wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, walker or other mobility equipment? You may want to have a wheelchair with you.
- Is the house accessible by ramp or other means?
- Is there room to maneuver in all rooms and hallways?
- If positioning is required, where will it be done and is there room to do it safely?
- If positioning is done on the floor, has the provider been trained in lifting and transferring? (Transferring from the floor is difficult. Positioning tables can be built for very little money. Sidelyers can be used on a sofa, but wedges cannot.)

Bathroom

- Is it large enough to accommodate equipment? (Having the equipment with you will take the guesswork out of it.)
- Is there enough room to maneuver?
- Is there enough room for the provider to assist the person to transfer safely?
- Is there a safe way to bathe? If needed, is the bathtub adapted with hand bars, a lift or other equipment? Is there room for the provider to assist with bathing? What measures will be taken to prevent scalding?
- Is the sink accessible?

Bedroom

- Is the bedroom large enough for the person to safely maneuver and transfer?
- Are rails required for the bed? If so, what needs to be done?

Kitchen

- What safeguards are in place to ensure hot surfaces are not an injury risk?

Safety Issues

- Are there obvious dangers like loose carpeting, broken tiles, peeling paint or exposed wiring?
- Are there safety caps on electrical outlets?
- Does the house appear clean (carpet, furniture, floors, etc.) and free of obvious infestation (roach, mice, etc.)?
- Is there an unpleasant odor or a moldy smell? (This is important if there are respiratory related health problems or allergies.)
- Are there sharp corners on furniture, which could pose a hazard?
- Are there railings on all steps inside and outside the house?
- Are there safety gates and locked cabinets to prevent exposure to medications, harmful chemicals, and cleaning materials?
- Are fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in place and functioning properly?
- In case of an emergency, are exits conveniently located? What is the evacuation plan in case of tornado, fire, flooding, etc.?
- Are first aid supplies available?
- Are toys age-appropriate, accessible, and safe?

Health Issues

- Does the respite provider need training to give medications?
- Do treatments require a licensed nurse to administer? If so, can the licensed nurse perform these treatments in the respite provider's home?
- If respiratory issues are involved, does the respite provider smoke? Does the house smell of smoke? Has the provider recently painted or used chemicals with noxious fumes (ammonia, varnish, paint remover, etc.)?
- Is the house well ventilated?

Behavioral Issues

- Are there small objects that can be picked up and thrown? Are there plate glass windows and doors?
- Is training needed in how to work with behavioral issues?

Appendix A.

Care Receiver Information Sheet

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide valuable information to the respite provider.

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Caregiver Name:

Phone:

Emergency Contact:

Emergency Phone:

Physician:

Phone:

Address:

Hospital Preference:

Phone:

Address:

Health Insurance Provider:

Phone:

Medical Information

Allergies to Medications:

Other allergies:

List medications, dosage, and times for administering the medication and the medical condition for which the medications is prescribed/given:

Medication

Dosage

Time

Condition

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Describe any medications side effects:

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Describe any medical condition that the respite voucher provider will need to know about (seizures, tracheotomy care, gastrostomy, etc.)

What training will the provider need to respond to medical conditions described above?

How are insect bites treated?

Note any other medical instructions:

Active Equipment Information

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Mobility:

Positioning:

Bathing:

Mealtime:

Adaptive Transportation:

Vision:

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Hearing:

What training will the respite provider need to safely use the equipment?

Household Activities/Rules

Favorite activities, hobbies, or routines (list any limitations):

Are visitors allowed? If so, who?

Name of Person Requiring Care:

Other information/rules?

Mealtime Information

How does your family indicate that he or she is hungry?

Is there any known food allergies?

Where are meals eaten?

Are there special food preparation methods to be used (puree, chopped, thickened)?

Are special dishes, spoons, or adaptive equipment used during mealtime?

Should your family member require assistance with eating?

What training will the respite provider need?

Are there positioning requirements for mealtime? If so, what?

What are your family member's favorite foods?

What foods are off limits?

Emotional/Behavioral Information

How does the care receiver express likes and dislikes?

What activities or daily routines are difficult for the care recipient?

Name of Person Requiring Care:

What signals will indicate to the respite provider the care receiver is about to become upset?

What do you do to help the care receiver through a difficult situation?

Are there any serious emotional/behavioral issues?

Security and Emergency Information

Does the home have a security system? If so, what does the respite provider need to do to activate/deactivate the alarm? Also, what does the respite provider need to do if the alarm is accidentally activated?

Where can the following be located?

Telephone:

Thermostat:

Fuse box
and/or Circuit
Breaker Box:

Water Shut-
Off:

First Aid
Kit/Medical
Supplies:

Other information

What additional information would you like the respite provider to know about the care recipient?

