

**A “Did You Know? Now You Know!”  
FACT SHEET**



## **Finding and Funding Respite for Your Child with Special Needs**

For families who have children with special needs, finding someone to care for their child so they can take a break from caregiving can be difficult. However, it is important for the health and well-being of the entire family to have time away from the stresses of being the primary caretaker. Having a respite provider care for a child with a disability or special health care need allows parents and family members to have quality time for themselves, with their spouse and with their other children.

### **What is *Respite Care*?**

Respite Care provides short term relief or time off from caregiving responsibilities for parents/families who have a child or other family member with a disability or special health care need. A respite care provider usually refers to a trained, qualified provider for children or adults with more complex needs (either because of a disability or a chronic health care condition). However, family, friends, members of a family’s faith community or other paid or non-paid providers could also care for a child and give the family a break.

### **Is *Respite Care* the same as *Personal Care Services* covered by Medicaid?**

No, respite is not the same as a Medicaid benefit called personal care services. Personal care services assist a child or adult with daily activities such as feeding, toileting, bathing, dressing and meal preparation. While personal care services must be provided in the home, respite care can be provided in the home or out in the community. Remember, personal care services can be covered by your child’s Medicaid/Forward Health card but Respite Care will not be covered under the Medicaid card.

### **What options are there to pay for *Respite Care*?**

State and county programs including the Family Support Program and the Children’s Long Term Support (CLTS) Waivers can provide funding for Respite Care. Both programs have eligibility requirements that include: the child must have a severe disability, be under the age of 21, and be living at home.

To learn more about the Family Support Program go to:

**[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/fsp/](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/fsp/)**

To learn more about Children’s Long Term Support (CLTS) Waivers go to:

**[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/clts/index.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/clts/index.htm)**



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Families may also be able to access short term or emergency respite from local or county Respite Care programs. The Respite Care Association of Wisconsin (**608-222-2033** or at [www.respitecarewi.org](http://www.respitecarewi.org)) can assist families with finding programs in their area.

In addition, the Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs may be aware of funding and/or programs (see contact information below). However, for many families outside funding is not available so they must pay privately for respite care.

**Are there waiting lists to receive services from Respite Care Programs?**

Yes, many Respite Care Programs have long waiting lists. Some programs have exceptions for families in crisis or families who have a particularly urgent need so talk to the respite program staff about your family’s situation. In addition, some respite care programs may be willing to share their listing of respite providers with you even if you are on a waiting list for services.

**How else can I find Respite Care?**

You should consider informal supports when looking for Respite Care. This could mean getting care for your child from extended family, friends and neighbors, asking for help from your faith community or talking to other families at a parent support group about the respite providers they know about. If you live close to a technical college or university, a student interested in health care, education or early childhood may be a great respite provider. Students in many programs may be willing to work a limited number of hours for free in order to fulfill class requirements and will get great “real world” experience.

**Are there overnight Respite Care options in Wisconsin?**

Yes. There are overnight respite programs during the school year as well as during the summer months for both children and adults with disabilities and other special needs that are fun for the participants as well as providing relief from caregivers. For a listing, go to the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin website at [www.respitecarewi.org](http://www.respitecarewi.org) or contact United Cerebral Palsy of Southeastern Wisconsin’s Information and Referral Line at **414-329-4500** or [www.ucpsew.org](http://www.ucpsew.org). Some examples include the Elks/Easter Seals Respite Camps, Wisconsin Badger Camp and Camp AweSum.

**What if I have additional questions about Respite Care?** Contact your Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs. To find the Regional Center closest to you call **1.800.642.7837**. You can also call the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin at **608.222.2033**.