

How to Find Respite and Personal Care Providers

Children with disabilities or special health care needs and their families can benefit from having help at home. Parents can also benefit from having someone outside their immediate family assist a child at home and provide much need “time off” from caregiving. However, it may be hard to find workers to fill these positions.

Before starting the recruitment process, think about your needs, such as what time of day your family needs help most and what type of caregiving or respite activities are required. Being as specific as possible will help find the right workers for your family.

Where Do I Find a Worker for My Child?

- **Word of Mouth:** Let people you know or work with know that you are looking for a personal care or respite worker. If you are part of a faith community, neighborhood group or parent support group, let members know.
- **Your Child’s School:** let teachers, therapists, aides or other paraprofessionals at your child’s current and former schools know that you are looking for workers.
- **University/Colleges and Technical Schools:** connect with local colleges or programs for students interested in health care, education, nursing, social work or related fields. Program staff may be able to send out emails or post your position.
- **Job Boards:** there are both online and physical job boards available where a position description can be posted. Many local libraries have job boards or will know where to find them in your area. Respite programs or personal care agencies can also help locate job boards.
- **Community Programs:** contact local programs that serve children, like the YMCA, summer camps, after-school programs or babysitter services.
- **Ads in local newspapers:** place an ad in local or neighborhood newspapers.

Keep in mind that if your child is under age 18, you may be able to hire **a relative** to be your personal care worker. For those over age 18, **a parent or relative** can be hired by a personal care agency to provide personal care services. Respite programs may also be willing to hire relatives.

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Meeting Potential Personal Care or Respite Workers:

Once you have been successful in finding a potential worker for your child, it is important to invite them to your home and make sure they will be a good match for your family.

Consider using the following guidelines as you interview potential candidates:

Start by:

- Explaining your child's health, medical and/or behavioral conditions.
- Let them know what days and times of day you need help.
- Describe what you are looking for in a worker and what their time with your child will look like.
- Discuss any special rules or expectations you have for any worker – for example, call when they are running late or don't come when they have a cold.

Questions You Could Ask:

- Do they have experience working with children with special needs? If not, have they been a caregiver for a sibling or babysitter?
- What is their availability and will it change each semester (if they are a student)?
- Do they have reliable transportation? Will they need a car or are you on a bus line?
- Are they comfortable with all the duties of the position (for example, using equipment, changing a diaper, reacting to certain behaviors).

Once you have decided to hire a worker, contact the respite care or personal care agency. The worker will likely have to participate in training, complete paperwork and have a background check which could take a month or more.

If you have additional questions, or need help finding services, contact the following organizations:

- **Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs -**
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index
- **Well Badger Resource Center -** wellbadger.org or 1-800-642-7837