**Brief Overview**

Respite offers a short-term break for caregivers and those they support. Time apart can boost well-being for all: While caregivers temporarily shift their focus to self-care, care recipients have time to meet new people and explore new interests.

Modern families come in many styles. Primary caregivers may be a parent, a child, a spouse or partner and they might be other relatives (kinship providers), friends, or neighbors. “Care recipient” is a term for anyone who requires assistance for daily living. “Caregiver” refers to anyone who provides regular assistance to a child or adult with a chronic or disabling condition.

Finding an appropriate respite service and organizing payment can feel challenging. This article provides guidance to simplify the steps.

**Check standards and safety measures**

When researching a respite agency, caregivers can assess whether the agency meets standards and is following appropriate safety measures, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Registered, publicly funded respite providers are required to meet certain standards and qualifications, including background checks and training. The public agency that pays for the service is responsible to track and share information about those procedures and quality measures. If respite is paid for by private medical or long-term care insurance, providers must meet the insurance company’s standards. Caregivers can ask an insurance company representative to explain the standards and how they are upheld.

[Lifespan Respite Washington](https://www.lifespanrespitewa.org/respite-care/potential-questions-to-ask-your-potential-respite-provider/) provides a checklist with questions to consider. Here are a few examples:

* How are the workers selected and trained?
* Can the respite worker administer medications or assist with medical tasks?
* If the provider will be driving the care recipient, do they have a valid driver’s license?
* How are emergencies and problems handled?
* What safety measures are in place to protect against COVID-19?

The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center provides a free, downloadable 17-page guidebook, [ABCs of Respite: A Consumer Guide for Family Caregivers](https://www.nysadultday.com/assets/docs/Resources/ABCsofRespite_Updated_6-17.pd.pdf). ARCH stands for Access to Respite Care and Help.

**What respite services would be most helpful?**

Respite includes a broad range of services. Some organizations offer short-term, overnight stays in their facilities and some provide daytime services. Some respite services are delivered into the home, including these examples:

* personal hygiene care
* meal preparation
* light housekeeping
* companionship, activities, or supervision

Community Living Connections (CLC) provides an [online assessment](https://washingtoncommunitylivingconnections.org/consite/find/assessment/index.php) to help caregivers figure out what type of help they may want or need. Washington State’s CLC is part of a national collaborative that includes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Veterans Administration, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Washington’s [Pathways to Respite](https://informingfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Pathways-to-Respite-sm.pdf) booklet includes “fill-in-the-blanks” tools to help define needs, including the following example:

“I would like to take a break, but I am concerned that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” and “If I had some time to myself, I would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

Pathways to Respite was developed by Informing Families, a resource of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council, in partnership with the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration, Aging & Long-Term Support Administration, and PAVE, which administers Lifespan Respite WA.

**Depending on how you will pay for respite, you may have a different pool of respite agencies, programs, or providers to choose from:**

If a family will pay directly for respite services, providers are easily found online. Here are some suggestions to launch a search:

* Adult Day Services Washington State
* After-school programs children with special health care needs Washington State
* In-home respite care Washington State

Another way to navigate the provider system is to connect to a [website managed by SEIU 775](http://seiu775.org/parent-provider-resources/):  The Service Employees International Union is comprised of independent service providers who have a collective bargaining agreement with Washington state’s Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

If a care recipient is eligible for respite through private medical insurance, the insurance company may list approved providers.

Publicly funded respite programs also provide lists of registered providers. Family caregivers who have respite funding through Medicaid or the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) can use [CarinaCare.com](https://www.carinacare.com/), an online tool to connect individuals with providers. A [Who’s Who page](https://www.carinacare.com/whoswho) describes provider credentials.

If you receive a [voucher from Lifespan Respite WA,](https://www.lifespanrespitewa.org/voucher-program/) it may be used with with any of the [registered Lifespan Respite Providers](https://www.lifespanrespitewa.org/voucher-program/current-registered-providers/). Lifespan Respite WA provides information about [how to apply for a voucher](https://www.lifespanrespitewa.org/voucher-program/). Vouchers are “mini-grants” for unpaid caregivers supporting a family member, friend or neighbor who has a special need or condition. Vouchers are available as funding permits.

**Who qualifies for free or low-cost respite care?**

In Washington State, eligibility for free or low-cost respite services may depend on a person’s circumstances or the category of disability.

* Seniors and Adults with Disabilities
	+ Seniors 65 and older who meet functional and financial eligibility can receive a variety of services through Home and Community Services (HCS).
	+ Unpaid caregivers of adults 55 and older who meet functional and financial eligibility can receive respite care and other needed support services like caregiver education, support groups, housework and errands and other services.
* People with Developmental Disabilities (All Ages) and Children with Disabilities
	+ Children and adults with developmental disabilities who meet eligibility criteria for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) may be able to receive respite, personal care, assistive technology, community engagement support, and other services provided through Home and Community-Based Services and Community First Choice (CFC).
	+ Children with disabilities who are not DDA eligible may still be able to receive CFC through DDA.

**How to apply:**

* Request an application packet on the [DDA page of the DSHS website](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda/service-and-information-request).
* Review the [Washington Waiver Factsheet](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/Waiver-Descript-Factsheet/WA), which describes Medicaid waiver programs and who may qualify.
* Contact a local HCS office or Area Agency on Aging. Locations are listed on the website of [Washington’s Community Living Connections/waclc.org](https://waclc.org/consite/index.php).

**Foster care respite**

Respite care is available for foster parents licensed by the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR), a Tribal agency, or a Child Placing Agency (CPA). Unlicensed relative caregivers or those determined to be “suitable person placements” also can receive respite, as can caregivers assigned by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families ([DCYF](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/taxonomy/term/80)) or a Washington Tribe.

Child Specific Respite (CSR) is linked directly to the medical, behavioral, or special needs of an individual child. CSR authorizes respite relief to families providing care to a child placed by DCYF on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the written service plan for the child.

**Veterans and Military Family Caregivers**

Veteran’s families may qualify for respite through the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers ([PCAFC](https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp)), operated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. PCAFC offers up to 30 hours of respite: Program options, eligibility and the application process are described in a [downloadable booklet](https://www.caregiver.va.gov/pdfs/MIssionAct/CSP_PCAFC_Booklet_102120_Approved_Final.pdf) published Oct. 1, 2020.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offer [Respite Relief for Military and Veteran Caregivers](https://hiddenheroes.org/respite/), no-cost, short-term relief with the help of in-home care professionals. See [Hidden Heroes](https://hiddenheroes.org/respite/) for further information.

Active-duty military and Activated Reserve or National Guard family caregivers may be eligible for respite care through TRICARE, the military healthcare system. Here are resources for military family caregivers:

* Respite care for primary caregivers of service members injured in the line of duty can be found on the [TRICARE website](https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/RespiteCare).
* [Extended Care Health Option (ECHO)](https://tricare.mil/Plans/SpecialPrograms/ECHO) can be a respite resource for caregivers of non-military family members.
* Some installations have respite funding available when the care recipient is enrolled in the [Exceptional Family Member Program.](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/special-needs/exceptional-family-member/exceptional-family-member-program-family-support)
* Coast Guard family caregivers have the [Special Needs Program](https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Human-Resources-CG-1/Health-Safety-and-Work-Life-CG-11/Office-of-Work-Life-CG-111/Special-Needs-Program-SNP/) which may offer respite or funding for respite:
* [Coast Guard Mutual Assistance](https://www.cgmahq.org/programs/special.html) has Respite Care Grants available for eligible Coast Guard clients who have responsibility 24 hours per day to care for an ill or disabled family member who lives in the same household.

A version of this article was first published in the Pipeline newsletter, a service of PAVE. PAVE is the host agency for Lifespan Respite WA. The article is also available on [PAVE's website](https://wapave.org/respite-offers-a-break-for-caregivers-and-those-they-support/).