



Respite Care in Colorado

By Anne Wallace

Respite care provides temporary relief to a caregiver from the physical and emotional impacts of caring for a person with special needs who requires assistance to care for themselves. Care can be provided for a few hours, overnight, or on an extended basis by a friend, family member, volunteer, paid service provider, or in a community-based care setting. This *issue brief* provides an overview of state respite care services.

Department of Health Care Policy and Financing Respite Services

The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) funds respite care services through the Family Support Services Program, certain Medicaid waivers, the Program for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly, and the private duty nursing and hospice Medicaid benefits.

Family Support Services Program (FSSP). The FSSP provides support to families to allow their children with developmental disabilities or delays to remain in the home. One of the benefits of the FSSP is respite care services. There are no specific limitations on the duration of respite care, and funding is provided to families based on their needs. Respite care services may be accessed through community-centered boards (CCBs), and certain CCBs offer group respite opportunities. CCBs are agencies responsible for delivering and managing services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. About 2,115 individuals statewide received respite services through the FSSP in FY 2019-20.

Medicaid waivers. Respite care services may be accessed through Medicaid home- and community-based services (HCBS) waivers. Medicaid waivers allow the state to provide benefits to specific populations who meet eligibility criteria. Respite care services may be provided on a short-term basis to support the primary caregivers of a Medicaid client. The following waivers include respite care as a benefit:

- HCBS Children's Extensive Support waiver;
- HCBS Children's Habilitation Residential Program (CHRP) waiver;
- HCBS waiver for children with life limiting illness;
- HCBS waiver for community mental health supports;
- HCBS waiver for persons who are elderly, blind, and disabled;
- HCBS waiver for persons with brain injury;
- HCBS waiver for persons with spinal cord injury; and
- Supported Living Services (SLS) waiver.

The SLS waiver does not limit the duration of respite care. The CHRP waiver has a maximum of 28 days of respite care per year, and all other waivers limit respite care to a maximum of 30 days per year. In FY 2019-20, about 3,167 Medicaid clients accessed respite care through waiver programs.

Hospice Medicaid benefit. Hospice care is a Medicaid benefit for clients who are terminally ill, and includes respite services. The benefit allows a terminally ill client to receive up to five consecutive days of respite care in an inpatient facility annually.

Private duty nursing Medicaid benefit. Private duty nursing is a Medicaid benefit for certain clients with special needs that require in-home skilled nursing. Respite care is included as a service for pediatric clients during periods when the family caregiver is unavailable due to illness, injury, or absence. The service is limited to 21 days annually. The benefit does not cover respite services for adults.

Program for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). The PACE program provides comprehensive medical and social services to eligible individuals 55 years of age and older to help them live in their homes and stay in their communities. One of the services offered to PACE enrollees is respite care, in addition to adult day center services. HCPF reports that day center services fulfill respite-like needs. Only five PACE participants reported using respite services in FY 2019-20; however, 4,721 participants accessed day center activities in FY 2019-20.

Department of Human Services Respite Services

The Department of Human Services (DHS) funds respite care for adult caregivers, individuals experiencing behavioral health issues, and children involved in the child welfare system.

Area Agencies on Aging. Respite programs for adult caregivers are administered through the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). The AAAs fund programs for seniors, provide educational resources, and serve as portals to care. Some AAAs limit the dollar value of respite care, while others do not have a limit. About 832 caregivers accessed respite care through AAAs in FY 2019-20.

Colorado Crisis Services. The Colorado Crisis Services system provides services and treatment to persons experiencing a behavioral health or emotional crisis. The system includes access to respite care for adults and children. Upon referral, a patient may stay up to 14 days in a respite care location to provide relief to caregivers.

In FY 2019-20, 424 respite services were provided through the Crisis Services system.

Colorado Respite Coalition and Colorado Easterseals. The Colorado legislature created the Respite Care Task Force in 2015 to make recommendations regarding Colorado's respite care access, availability, and funding. In 2017, DHS contracted with the nonprofit Easterseals Colorado to implement the following task force recommendations:

- conduct research and data collection on the economic impact of respite care services;
- create caregiver outreach and education on the benefits of respite care and how to access care;
- develop comprehensive, standardized professional and family caregiver training; and
- standardize and streamline respite care options and state department regulations.

Easterseals is a nonprofit that provides programs and supports to enhance the quality of life and foster independence for people with disabilities and older adults. Easterseals collaborates with DHS to oversee the Colorado Respite Coalition. The Coalition webpage provides respite care information and resources for families, including a comprehensive navigation guide [here](#). In addition, Easterseals distributes a respite care voucher to eligible families and awards community grants to qualified for-profit organizations, nonprofit agencies, or governmental entities currently providing respite services. About 519 families received a respite care voucher in FY 2019-20.

Other DHS respite programs. Colorado foster parents may receive DHS funding to cover up to half the cost of respite services for their foster child. DHS also distributes federal family preservation funds to seven counties to support respite care providers.