
WHAT IS RESPITE?

Respite Care or 'short breaks' is the provision of short-term, temporary relief to those who are caring for family members who might otherwise require permanent placement in a facility outside the home.

Even though most families are happy to provide care to their disabled family member so that they can remain at home, the physical, emotional and financial consequences for the family caregiver can be overwhelming without some support, such as respite. Respite provides the much needed temporary break from the often exhausting challenges faced by the family caregiver.

Close to 80% of all long-term care is provided at home by family caregivers to children and adults with disabilities. Parents and family caregivers are the backbone of the long-term care system and save governments millions of dollars annually.

Research has shown that providing respite can have a positive effect on the health of the caregivers. Without respite not only can families suffer economically and emotionally, caregivers themselves may face serious health and social risks as a result of stress associated with continuous caregiving.

WHAT IS RESPITE SUPPORT?

Respite Support is designed to provide short-term breaks for carers, whilst providing a positive experience for the disabled person.

A respite service provides a safe alternative environment for a disabled person, with support staff who are able to meet the person's disability needs. Respite support is in general designed to be:

- Of a short term duration
- A positive, stimulating and worthwhile experience
- Available in community settings
- Part of the support network available to a person and their carers/family/whanau
- Accessed when a carer or family/whanau member requires a short term break from their normal support/care role

HOW DOES A PERSON GET RESPITE SUPPORT?

An assessment by a Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) agency is completed to determine whether a person meets the eligibility criteria for disability support services. The needs of the disabled person are identified, the amount of respite support is determined and support is provided to help those involved to find a suitable respite service. Use of respite support may be planned so that it is used on a regular basis for a pre-arranged time period, for example overnight once a week or every third weekend. Respite support may also be unplanned and is available in times of emergency or unforeseen event.

Families say the respite is needed to

- Reduce stress, rest and relaxation for caregivers
- Limit social isolation
- Help in times of emergency and illness
- Reduce dependence of the disabled person on family
- Reduce the demand for long term residential care

Respite should provide a positive experience for the person cared for as well as the caregiver, families want the same opportunities for recreation and leisure as non-disabled young people.. There is increasing recognition that the child with a disability should experience valuing a quality respite. Most often however, the opportunities available are segregated and when parents have tried to access more inclusive respite opportunities they have come up against barriers.












When parents are thinking of a more inclusive setting for their young person they need to find out what is available in their community, who to contact, and what support is needed while participating.

For example, OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) for 5-12 year old children is a programme run throughout New Zealand. OSCAR programmes provide both after school hours care and holiday programmes.

Parents have indicated that they have had difficulty accessing this programme for many reasons.

- Public attitudes towards their children
- Rigid rules and obstacles
- Attitude of providers and staff
- Lack of training for staff for full inclusion

Indicators of 'good' respite as identified by the Scottish Office Social Work Services Group 1996 documents suggest the that respite services should be

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|  Needs led |  Provided in a range of settings |
|  Planned |  Provide value for money |
|  Flexible |  Be affordable |
|  Provide a continuing programme of care |  Beneficial to both users and carers |
|  Provide feedback to the carer |  Be in partnership with providers, users and carers |
|  Be accessible | |

Respite organisations, staff and managers however, feel they are struggling against the system to provide such quality care. Quality in programmes is lost usually for one of two reasons

1. while there is the energy and passion to run good programmes this can fail because of a lack of attention to detail
2. while techniques may be clearly understood the spirit to provide a good service is not there.

Quality is about care, people, passion and consistency. Quality requires a level of commitment from all those involved in providing respite – from the student working on the holiday programme, the coordinator, the family offering shared care and from the manager of the respite home.

It makes sense to provide a good respite service as you are multiplying the effects of a happy customer and that is good for both the provider and the receiver of a service.

References

Davis, L. (2004). Towards Quality Respite for Children with Disabilities and their Families. A Review of Literature. Unpublished dissertation.

Wikipedia: Google 'Respite'