



## Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network

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The Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network's (Alabama Respite) voucher respite program has been in existence for 18 years, starting with funding for caregivers of children with disabilities living in one Congressional District in Alabama (District 5, Huntsville area). The program has grown to encompass all seven Congressional Districts in the state. The budget for the program in this fiscal year 2011 is over \$192,500. Three years ago the Alabama Department of Mental Health contacted Alabama Respite to manage their voucher project using the same protocol used with the original voucher respite program and serving caregivers of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout the lifespan. Additionally, this model has been implemented with grant funding specific to regions of the state that had voucher respite funding.

The method Alabama Respite uses to manage their voucher programs:

1. To enroll in the program, families requesting respite can call the Alabama Respite Office or go online to [www.alabamarespite.org](http://www.alabamarespite.org), to download or have an enrollment form mailed to them. The enrollment packet contains instructions and necessary forms to enroll in the program.
2. Caregivers complete an application for either skilled or unskilled respite services. Alabama Respite's Administrative Assistant reviews applications, requesting assistance from the Director of Respite Services and the Program Manager for Alabama Respite, as necessary, to determine eligibility, approve, and notify the family.
3. Specific eligibility requirements are determined by the criteria set by the funder. Alabama Respite's funders require proof of age and disability to receive voucher respite funding. The proof of diagnosis we require may come from a doctor's note referencing the information stated above or a Case Manager with adequate evidence of such information.
4. The Administrative Assistant clears the enrollment, with oversight by the Director of Respite Services and the Program Manager for Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network, and mails the family the voucher.
5. Families are given the brochure, Give Me a Break, Guide for Hiring and Keeping a good Respite Provider, which contains information on how to hire and train caregivers. This brochure and a multiple-page booklet about this topic are available for easy download on the website, [www.alabamarespite.org](http://www.alabamarespite.org).

6. The caregiver must accept full responsibility for selecting, hiring, and training the respite provider of their choice as well as determining how much the provider will be paid, with maximum compensation as allowed by the funding source. Alabama Respite's funders allow up to \$10.00/hr for unskilled respite. One funder will allow up to \$25.00 for skilled respite on a case-by-case basis.
7. The family arranges respite with their selected provider upon notification of approval and submits a reimbursement form to Alabama Respite with the family caregiver's and provider's signatures on the voucher form indicating that service was rendered on a specific date and the number of hours the services were rendered. The amount of respite per quarter is also determined by the funder. Currently, funders impose a limit of \$100 per quarter per family.
8. The Administrative Assistant processes the returned voucher paperwork and approves expenditures for respite services. She obtains appropriate check signatures from the UCP finance department and Executive Director. The Director of Respite Services reviews the checks, the excel spreadsheet collecting the data, and produces the invoice monthly to have the agency reimbursed by the funder. When the funder reimburses our agency, then the family is mailed their check. The family holds the responsibility to pay the service provider.
9. All forms used for the above-described procedure have been developed and can easily be adapted for the use by other voucher respite projects.

Voucher respite provided in this manner offers a family the flexibility to use respite when they really need to and allows them to hire friends or family members as long as they do not reside in the home and are over 18 years old. This allows the family caregiver to hire someone who is familiar with the individual with a disability or chronic illness and may be already equipped to handle the specific situation.

One component of Alabama Respite's commitment to insure success of the voucher respite services is our extensive networking ability. The staff spends a significant amount of time across the state, presenting information on the importance of respite and sharing information about where respite funding can be found. In addition, our web site [www.alabamarespite.org](http://www.alabamarespite.org) contains news and information on new respite resources and funding as it is identified. Alabama Respite also uses every possible means to target the particular families who would most benefit from these funds.

A very important portion of our mission is to advocate with our state and federal legislators, educating them on the need for respite in their districts and working to secure further funding for respite services for people with all disabilities and special needs living in our state.

We do charge a negotiated administrative fee to cover the cost of running the voucher programs. A 12.5% cost is used for our larger amounts of funding.

For additional information, please do not hesitate to call either Java Bennett at 256.859.5600 or our Alabama Respite Program Manager, Linda Lamberth, at 256.237.3683. Please visit the [website](#) to view copies of our brochures, enrollment forms, and provider-training manual for caregivers.