



*Hiring Respite Care Providers*

*A Handbook for Accessing and Using Services*

Presented by:  
The Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network  
A Program of  
United Cerebral Palsy of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley, Inc.

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*Special thanks to the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities' Personal Care Attendant Task Force and their Personal Care Attendant Handbook, portions of which this handbook was based.*

*The contents of this handbook are provided for informational purposes only and do not encompass all available information on hiring a respite provider. For answers to complex legal questions, users should consult a qualified attorney.*

## **Relationship Roles**

### ***Defining the Relationship***

When hiring a respite care provider (provider), it is important to define the relationship roles. Defining the relationship means knowing the responsibilities of the provider and the respite care recipient (caregiver). As the one purchasing or using volunteers to provide the respite care services, YOU are the manager! The relationship may be one of friendship or a family member, but first, the relationship must be viewed as that of a manager-assistant or employer-employee if the provider is to give quality respite care services the way you want them done. If the responsibilities are not clearly defined, problems will arise. It is not a matter of if, but when problems will surface.

### ***Setting the Boundaries***

As a part of defining the relationship between the provider and caregiver, it is important to set the boundaries of the relationship. Think of boundaries as limits and determine what your limits will be. Do you want strictly a business relationship? Friendship? It may be impossible for the relationship NOT to have the characteristics of both, but it is important to know that the business relationship needs to be primary. Most problems occur when the role of each person is unclear or when the roles change.

A part of setting the boundaries is dealing with the issue of control. Control is an issue in almost all relationships and is generally defined as managing, overseeing, or being in charge. The caregiver is the manager and must have primary control over the services provided by the respite provider. Control is NOT domination. Control involves managing and overseeing in order to accomplish a goal. Important to note is that the person in control of a situation must first be able to control his or her own thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Also important is the need for the person in charge to respond appropriately to situations. Every individual has the right to be treated with courtesy in a humane, dignified manner and be treated with courtesy. The caregiver is responsible for sharing with the provider their specific expectations with regard to respite care.

## **Burnout**

Keep in mind that the job of a respite care provider is not easy and can be quite stressful. Burnout prevention is crucial, and the following tips may help prevent burnout and keep you from having to recruit, hire, and train new respite providers too often.

- ❖ Since most providers are naturally more nurturing and take on the concerns of others more readily, encouraging your provider to take plenty of time for themselves.
- ❖ Try to include some variety in your provider's work and be as flexible as possible within limits. This may include the provider taking the loved one out of the house for a walk or some other activity both may enjoy.
- ❖ Have backup providers and use them if necessary.
- ❖ Communicate often with your provider. Good communication between the caregiver and provider cannot be overemphasized. Doing so will enable both of you to maintain a good working relationship.

## **Yes, You Need a Job Description**

In order to manage a provider, you will need to look closely at the ways you perform the daily living activities for your loved one. If you do this, you will be able to start building a realistic picture of what you need a provider to help you do while you take a break. This assessment of your needs will help you locate the right person for the job. Your likes/dislikes and requirements for a provider will help you put together a job description suitable to meet your needs.

### **Reasons you need to create a job description:**

- ❖ The process of creating a job description will help you develop a realistic view of your needs.
- ❖ A job description will give you a basis for interviewing applicants.
- ❖ A job description will help keep the interview focused on the job duties.
- ❖ A job description provides a potential provider with clear ideas about what your requirements for the job entail.
- ❖ After the provider is employed, the job description can be used as a checklist of duties and responsibilities.
- ❖ A job description can be a valuable tool in providing feedback for the provider when you wish to evaluate the provider's work performance.
- ❖ Your expectations can be clarified and remain in focus if based on a job description.
- ❖ A job description can help settle disagreements regarding job duties and responsibilities.

## **Sample Job Description**

### **Job Title:**

Respite Care Provider

### **Primary Function:**

To allow the caregiver of a person with a disability or chronic illness time to take a temporary, short-term break from their duties as primary caregiver (The respite provider may perform activities of daily living according to the personal needs of the individual.)

### **Supervision:**

Works under the direct supervision of the caregiver

### **Education:**

High School graduate or GED

Certified nursing assistant or similar training program is preferred, but not required.

### **Experience:**

Current work experience with individuals who have disabilities preferred

### **Skills:**

Effective written and oral communication skills

Ability to maintain a confidential working relationship

Good personal skills

Ability to consistently be at work on time

Ability to follow oral and written instructions

### **Knowledge:**

Working knowledge of signs and symptoms of common illnesses and conditions

Working knowledge of how to apply first aid, safety and emergency procedures

### **Job Duties: (possible choices)**

Assist with bathing and/or toileting activities

Assist with grooming/dressing activities

Assist with transfers and mobility activities

Assist with transportation activities

Assist with household chores

Assist with medications as directed

Provide basic first aid and safety procedures

Prepare food/assist with feeding

### **Terms of Employment:**

Part-time

### **Performance Evaluation:**

Performance will be evaluated by the caregiver.

**Sample Application for Respite Provider**

All information on this application will be kept confidential. Please print legibly.

**Personal information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (include area code): home: \_\_\_\_\_ cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a social security card? ( ) yes ( ) no

Can you perform the duties of the job described in the attached job description without reasonable accommodation? ( ) yes ( ) no ( ) uncertain

Have you worked with people with disabilities? ( ) yes ( ) no

If yes, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any training or experience you have had as a respite care provider:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What days and hours are you available to work? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to assist with transportation for an individual with a disability?

( ) yes ( ) no

**Education:**

Highest grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_ GED/Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Training: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Past Employment (please list your last three employers):**

Employer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date employment began: \_\_\_\_\_ Date employment ended: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Employer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date employment began: \_\_\_\_\_ Date employment ended: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Employer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date employment began: \_\_\_\_\_ Date employment ended: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of a crime, other than a minor traffic violation, within the past 7 years? ( ) yes ( ) no

If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had a background check performed? ( ) yes ( ) no

Do you have a copy of your background check, not over 1 year old? ( ) yes ( ) no

If no, would you be willing to have a background check performed? ( ) yes ( ) no

**References:**

**Please give three references, other than a relative:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of application:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Record Keeping/Agreement Contract**

Accurate record keeping is critical when keeping up with the time a respite worker provides a service for you. Keep in mind that you can set the time you wish to use respite services. The Department of Labor does require that a person working a scheduled amount of time be considered an employee and not a respite care provider. Be aware of the rules for paying a provider. Check with the IRS to determine the amount of income paid to ensure you as the employer know your responsibility for paying certain payroll benefits, if appropriate. Providing respite care is not the same as a personal care attendant, because it is only temporary care, and should not have a consistent time schedule. The IRS has publications and forms that will guide you on whether or not you will need to file taxes. The amount you pay a provider annually dictates what taxes, if any, have to be paid for the provider. Because most caregivers do not use a provider on a regular basis, they will not pay out the amount that would require they file payroll benefits. Please go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and access the following information:

- [Publication 926, Household Employer's Tax Guide](#)
- [Form 1040 \(Schedule H\), Instructions for Household Employers](#) (PDF)
- [SSA Publication No. 05-10021 - Household Workers](#)

An agreement between the caregiver and the provider is important as a means to formalize the relationship and clearly indicate the responsibilities of each. The agreement should be flexible, but it should also contain the main responsibilities of the respite care provider as well as the caregiver. As the duties of the provider change, the agreement should be updated. Reviewing the agreement every six months or at least annually is good practice. The following is a sample agreement and other factors should be added or clarified according to personal need.

**Sample record sheet contains basic information you may wish to use:**

Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Respite Provider: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Respite Care Provided: \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. Monday, Nov. 1, 2007)

Time in: \_\_\_\_\_ Time out: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Respite Care Provided: \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. Monday, Nov. 1, 2007)

Total Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Respite Care Provider's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Respite Care Provider's SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample Agreement:**

It is understood that the Respite Provider will carry out the duties and responsibilities listed in the job description while performing respite services.

Both the Respite Provider and the Caregiver will treat each other with mutual respect. Both will attempt to be flexible and work to solve problems as they arise.

The Respite Provider agrees to work for the following amount: \_\_\_\_\_per hour

If the Respite Provider must cancel a respite service, as much notice as possible will be given to the Caregiver. Also, if the Caregiver must cancel a respite care service, as much notice as possible will be given to the Provider.

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Signature of Respite Provider

Date

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Signature of Caregiver

Date

---

Review Date

**Respite Service Hours**

**Client Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Month/Year** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Amount/Hour** \_\_\_\_\_

Day & Date	Time In	Time Out	Total Hours
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.
	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.	a.m. p.m.

**Total Hours:** \_\_\_\_\_ **a.m.** \_\_\_\_\_ **p.m.** **Amt/Hr.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Paid** \_\_\_\_\_

**I certify that these time entries accurately reflect the respite services provided. I certify that respite services were provided in the CLIENT'S HOME and that NO medications or transportation have been provided without prior approval from Guardian/Parent.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Employee Signature** **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Guardian/Parent Signature** **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Telephone Screening of Applicants**

Screening potential providers is helpful. Telephone screening can save time for both you and the applicant. In the telephone screening, you should:

- ❖ Discuss important points about the job
- ❖ Find out information about the applicant
- ❖ Get a first impression of the person

### **Tips for Screening:**

- ❖ *Always trust your instincts and your "gut" reaction.*
- ❖ Be friendly and pleasant.
- ❖ Check to see if the person has reliable transportation and if getting to work on time will be a problem. If the applicant has a long commute, you will want assurance that it will not interfere with the job.
- ❖ Make sure you let the applicant know that you will need to do a criminal background check.
- ❖ Discuss money and hours. If the applicant is not able to accept the hours or the pay, now is the time to find out. There is no need to interview someone who already finds the job unacceptable.
- ❖ Give a brief description of the job duties, if the pay and hours are already determined to be acceptable.
- ❖ Set up a time to conduct a formal interview in person. Give directions and your address only to those you choose to interview. Consider using a location other than your home for the initial interview.

## **Interview Strategies**

You are interviewing a stranger, so use some common sense in setting up the face-to-face interview. Consider using a place other than your home for the interview. Prior to the interview, consider the personal qualities you feel are important in a respite provider. Keep in mind your feelings about:

- Trustworthiness
- Honesty
- Sense of humor
- Good attitude
- Common interests
- Dependability
- Ability to follow directions
- Good communication skills

## **Tips for Interviewing:**

- Try to make the situation as comfortable as possible.
- Explain the disability of your loved one to the extent that makes you comfortable.
- Provide a job description.
- Ask about jobs the person currently has or has had in the past including the tasks performed, how the applicant felt about those tasks (likes/dislikes), and if the person is currently working.
- Ask for at least two work references.
- Explain how you will evaluate job performance.
- Take notes as you interview.
- Be cautious about hiring someone on the spot. Be sure to check the references first! Keep in mind as you check references that just as employers are limited in what they can ask a job applicant, they are also limited in what they can reveal about current or former employees without written permission. The only information you can legally obtain from a former employer will be the date the person began work, the date they left employment, and whether or not the person is eligible to be rehired. But check those references, no matter what. You will be surprised what the voice can tell you regardless of the words!

## **Possible Interview Questions**

The following sample questions may be helpful. These questions are designed to help you learn more about the applicant and his/her lifestyle and personal habits. The questions are only as a guideline. Do not limit yourself! Hopefully, through a very thorough interview process, you will find a qualified provider that you will enjoy using for many years.

### **Food and Eating Arrangements:**

- Are you a good cook?
- Do you have any special training for assisting with feeding?
- Explain to the applicant what the rules will be regarding their eating at your home.

### **Transportation:**

- Can you drive or can you assist in using public transportation to go somewhere with my loved one?
- Do you have a valid driver's license and insurance? (Ask this only when driving is necessary to do the job.)

### **Housekeeping (most respite providers do not have housekeeping responsibilities):**

- Would you be willing to do minor housekeeping chores while providing respite? Explain what those may be; i.e. clean up kitchen after eating.
- Do you like things very neat or are you not particular?

### **Personal Needs:**

- Do you smoke?
- Do you drink?
- Will you stay overnight during a respite service?
- Do you prefer activities to be planned in advance or do you like spur of the moment? (Ask if you wish the respite provider to share in entertainment activities.)
- Do you have any hobbies?
- Do you mind watching TV with my loved one, or do you prefer not to watch?
- Do you consider yourself a flexible person? Can you give examples?
- How do you react to a change in plans at the last minute?
- If your loved one needs assistance with eating, mobility, toileting, etc., ask about any qualifications or training specific to need, or the applicant's willingness to participate in these daily living activities.
- If your loved one likes to be read to, ask if the applicant is able to read printed text.
- If you have a pet, ask if the person is allergic or has some other issues with pets.

### **About the Background Check**

Make sure that the person you are interviewing understands your need to conduct a criminal background check. You must have permission of the person who is a possible candidate to do a background check. Consent forms are designed specifically for this and may be obtained through your local police department or Department of Human Resources. The cost of doing a background search varies depending on who does the search and how extensive it is. For example, some police departments charge as little as \$10 fee for a search of their database or from the local county in which you live; however, remember that the information you get will depend on who does the search, so it may be worth the money to have a private company do the search for you. The private company may charge a little more, typically \$20-\$50 for a statewide search, and even a little bit more for the national search.

**A word to the wise – do not send the applicant to pick up the results!!!!**

### **How to Locate a Respite Provider**

Be creative and you will find there are many ways to locate potential respite care providers. There are a variety of ways to advertise if the limited registry of respite providers in your area does not meet your needs. In Alabama, you can visit [www.alabamarespite.org](http://www.alabamarespite.org) and click on the county where you live on the map provided and see who provides respite care in your area of the state. You can also contact Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network and ask for assistance. In the future, we hope to have a listing of qualified, trained respite providers.

Other ways to locate a provider:

- Word of mouth
- Agencies – don't overlook any non-profit or for-profit that might be able to screen or refer applicants
- Local newspapers (learn about writing an advertisement in another section of this booklet)
- Local newsletters – support groups or disability group newsletters
- Social Service agencies
- Health Care agencies
- Job services or employment offices
- Financial aid offices at colleges, universities, technical schools or similar places
- Rehabilitation centers
- Hospital or university nursing, social work, education, vocational schools
- Nursing homes or assisted living facilities
- Churches or faith-based organizations

### **Writing an Advertisement for a Provider**

When it comes to composing an advertisement to hire your provider, keep in mind that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Keep your specific needs in mind. Consider including any of the following that apply to your situation:

- ❖ Who – are you looking for?
- ❖ What – do you want them to do for you?
- ❖ When – will you need their services?
- ❖ Where – will they provide the respite care services?
- ❖ Pay – how much are you going to offer?
- ❖ Amount of training needed for the job
- ❖ A contact person's name
- ❖ Phone number to call
- ❖ Preferred time to call
- ❖ How much time will you need their services?
- ❖ Preference for male or female provider
- ❖ Smoker or nonsmoker preferred
- ❖ Do they have their own transportation?

**Remember** that you want your advertisement to attract the attention of the potential respite provider, so what is it about your advertisement that would make someone want to respond?

You may want to stress something positive about the job as a heading. Make the advertisement direct, clear, short, and easy to understand.

Use descriptive words such as dependable, reliable and punctual.

Check with your local newspaper to find out the best days to run an advertisement like yours, but in general weekends and Wednesdays are best.

### **Sample Advertisements:**

Earn money by assisting others! Assist an individual with daily living activities for a few hours at a time. Dependable, experience preferred but will train. Four hours per week, flexible schedule. Call Mary at 555-5555.

Assist a family caregiver to take a break from full-time care of a loved one with disabilities. Dependable, honest, loves children - ideal for student. Call Joe at 333-3333.

Enjoy working with people? Assist an elderly gentleman for a few hours per week while the full-time caregiver takes a break. Hours and pay negotiable Call Sue at 222-2222.

## **Creating a Good Work Environment**

Respite work generally does not pay well and offers few if any benefits. Those who choose to work as a provider often take the job for other rewards such as personal satisfaction or a chance to work with people with disabilities or chronic illnesses while helping out caregivers. The work environment is one of the most important factors in keeping a provider.

You should do what you can to create a work environment that will bring out the best in your provider. Maintaining a positive attitude and being satisfied with his/her work is essential for the provider to continue helping you with respite services. Good communication between you and your provider will enable both of you to get along better and be happier with the arrangement.

- ❖ Offer praise for good/correct performance. Many individuals will work just as hard for praise, and it is just as important as what you are able to pay your provider. Everyone wants to feel appreciated, needed and valued.
- ❖ When it is necessary to point out that you are displeased with something that your respite provider has done, it is important to remember to be open, honest, and criticize the action, not the individual.
- ❖ Don't let small irritations build up until an angry outburst occurs. Anger that is vented after building up is often expressed in destructive ways. Always make a point of discussing something that irritates you as soon as possible. Confrontation is not pleasant – just necessary.
- ❖ Respect your provider. Remember that your provider is a human being and would like to be treated in an honest, kind, respectful and patient manner – the same way you would like to be treated.
- ❖ Talk to your provider and be open about making changes in the job description or compromise to alleviate a problem.
- ❖ Terminate the agreement if the relationship is not working out. There are good ways and bad ways to accomplish this task if necessary.
- ❖ Keep your working relationship separate from your personal life.
- ❖ You have the opportunity to provide a positive work environment for your provider as well as yourself and your loved one. Remember that good communication with your provider is the key to a good relationship. When everyone is happy, the provider will stay with you longer and do a better job for you – a mutual benefit for both.

## **How to Give Praise and Feedback to your Respite Provider**

### *Giving Praise*

- Always be sincere and don't say something you don't really mean.
- Give compliments often for good work performance.

### *Two-Step Compliment*

- Describe the situation or event that you like.
- Tell what your feeling was when it happened, and say you appreciate it, or say "thank you."

### *Giving Constructive Criticism*

- Use criticism as a tool for sharing information with your provider.
- Remember that the whole idea is to help you take a break from full-time care-giving responsibilities, and you want them to perform to your expectations and continue providing respite for your benefit.

### *Three-Step Correction*

- First, describe the situation or event you disliked.
- Second, tell what your feeling was when it happened.
- Third, state how you would like it handled the next time.

### *Suggestions for Giving Correction*

- Give the feedback as soon as possible after the situation you dislike occurs.
- Discuss only one incident at a time.
- Do not bring up things from the past.
- Talk only about the present, no matter how great the temptation to do otherwise.
- Focus on the person's actions, not the person.
- Keep the discussion brief and to the point.
- Don't exaggerate or become emotional.
- Be aware of your tone of voice. Only 30% of messages you send are sent with words. Your body language does the rest, and that includes your tone of voice and inflection. The way you speak will affect the way your provider reacts.

## **Training your Respite Provider**

The amount and type of training you will need to give your provider will depend on the specific needs of your loved one. Training a provider is based on your needs and will reduce confusion later.

### **Checklist for Training your Respite Provider**

- Begin by explaining the disability or illness of your loved one in as much detail as you feel is necessary for your provider to understand what your needs will be in regard to providing the respite service.
- Explain any technical words you might use and be as specific as possible.
- Emphasize anything related to safety or emergencies. If there is a procedure other than to call 911, make sure your provider knows and understands how to utilize it appropriately.
- Give step by step instructions for any procedures your provider will be asked to help your loved one do, for example, eating or transferring. Emphasize the importance of doing the procedure in a certain way.
- Never assume that your provider knows exactly what you mean. Whenever you explain a procedure, be sure to have the provider explain it to you in his/her own words so that you know the instructions are understood.
- Be patient. Give the provider time to learn the routine. No matter how many respite workers you have had in the past, it will be different with each one.
- Try to put yourself in your provider's place, and be aware of your provider's feelings as you train.
- Utilize the services of others to help with the training process. Family members or former providers can be a great help training a new provider.
- Do not correct or confront your provider in front of others. Your public behavior reflects your effectiveness as a manager.
- When it is necessary to dismiss a provider, state your reasons clearly without verbally attacking the provider.
- It is illegal to hold payment for services for any reason for a service that has been provided, no matter how dissatisfied you were with the service. Simply dismiss and pay the respite provider.

### **Terminating an Employee**

- If you do have to let someone go, do it face to face, never by letter or over the phone.
- Set up a time to discuss the matter, and find out the true reason for why a respite worker does not want to provide a service any longer if possible.
- If there is a legal challenge by either party, you may need to consult legal services prior to the meeting.
- Remember to document the conversation in writing for your records, putting the date, time, location and pertinent details of the event.