Tennessee Respite Coalition

Start-Up Process

• In the early 1990s, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse took the lead in the startup of the Tennessee Respite Coalition (TRC). The state agency invited all interested parties, including community agencies, family caregivers, other state agencies and service providers to become involved.

• Initial funding for the coalition included in-kind contributions of office space and supplies from the state department coupled with a federal coalition-building grant from the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health.

• Motivating factors in coalition startup:
  • Legislative Awareness Days
  • Gaining funding for a respite resource hub
  • Federal Lifespan Respite Bill
  • Networking opportunities
  • Hosting National Conference in collaboration with ARCH

Structure

• The TRC was statewide from its inception.

• Before funding, a small group focused on awareness and grant writing (to fund future efforts).

• Once funded and staffed with a full-time coordinator, the TRC began establishing regional groups. Seven regional groups across the state were formed with volunteers serving as chairs. The coordinator traveled to the regions to motivate and organize the groups.

• Newsletters and other communications were distributed to keep the group cohesive.

• By 2003, the regional coalition groups were established and the group had grown to more than 1,000 members. When the coalition building funding was exhausted, the TRC became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency in November 2003.

• A board of directors votes on fiscal, operational, and programmatic decisions. The board meets on a bi-monthly basis for business meetings and has a board retreat in June each year. The board has standing committees that meet on a regular basis: Finance, PR/Marketing, Program, and Fundraising.

Staff

• Originally, a full-time staff person was hired to coordinate the regional groups. The coordinator was a contracted worker for the State of TN Dept. of Mental Health and Retardation, the founding state agency.

• Once the TRC became an independent nonprofit entity, the coordinator became the executive director. Staffing levels and locations have fluctuated over the years depending on levels of funding. Currently, the TRC has 3 staff, including the Executive Director, Program Coordinator for the Respite Helpline and Voucher Program, and Volunteer and Senior Companions Coordinator.

Funding

• Funding was initially supplied by the State of TN through a grant from the Federal Bureau of Maternal and Child Health. The funds were granted for three years and were allowed to carry over into the fourth year.

• Once the initial grant funding was exhausted, the TRC became a nonprofit organization so that it could solicit funding through grants and private donations. Many foundations require the 501(c) (3) status for funding consideration. Another advantage to this move was being tax exempt and able to offer private donors tax deductions.

• Current funding includes state grants, Corporation for National and Community Service, private foundation grants, private donations through annual campaigns and memorials, and funds collected through events.
• Fundraising events have included: Jazzin for Respite, The Art of Time, Beer & Cheese Tasting, Chips and Salsa, Founders Celebration, Riders for Respite and Writers for Respite.
• The TRC receives many in-kind donations of office supplies, silent auction items, caregiver gifts, etc.

Membership
• The TRC is a loose network of more than 200 community partners that provide information and assistance to caregiving families. Members include diverse representation from medical professionals, social workers, legislators, caregivers, service providers, and teachers. The TRC covers the lifespan and is a cross-disability organization.
• The TRC does not require dues and is not considered to be a “Member” organization because of its 501(c)(3) status.
• Membership is based on interest level. A person or organization must be interested and invested in respite to become a member.
• Members were and are recruited by other members. During the coalition-building period, regional contests helped boost membership.

Meetings and Communication
• In the past, regional coalition meetings were held throughout the state on a regular basis. Since becoming a 501(c)(3), the TRC groups have meetings when they have activities or need planning time.
• At the inception of the TRC, statewide meetings were held quarterly. Lunch was supplied, regions made reports, national updates were provided, and the TRC director offered ideas to keep the regional groups excited about respite.
• Meeting notices were sent by email, snail mail and fax. Currently, meeting notices go out by email and are coordinated on the local level.
• Marketing materials are available for members to spread the word about respite.
• During coalition building, newsletters were monthly. Now they range from monthly to quarterly.
• The website has been through several incarnations with several volunteers, and currently is operating effectively. In October 2016, a Community Hack event created an online application form for caregivers to use to apply for TRC services.

Major Activities
• The TRC, in partnership with ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, hosted the National Lifespan Respite Conferences in 2004 and 2014 in Nashville.
• In 2010, the TRC received grant funding from the Tennessee Disability Coalition to customize Salesforce to track and report respite services. The database is still used today.
• The TRC was named the partner organization for the Senior Companion Program in Davidson County in 2011. This program, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, has allowed the TRC to expand the number of caregivers receiving respite.
• The TRC continues to partner with the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability in activities funded by Lifespan Respite Care Act funding. Tennessee was granted funds in 2009–2013 and 2014–2017. The most current grant has allowed the TRC and TCAD to complete a statewide assessment of respite needs and is working on a state plan for respite.
• The TRC hosts National Family Caregiver Month activities each November in various areas of the state. Some of the activities include: family caregiver pampering days, legislative activities, banquets, media coverage, family caregiver gifts, etc.
• In 2017, the TRC received a grant to start using Music and Memory as a tool in the Senior Companions Program. Volunteers create custom playlists for care recipients and use them on iPods while providing respite.
• Lifespan Respite Summit: 2006
• Family directed respite: TRC provides more than 300 family caregivers with respite vouchers for an array of direct services depending on the needs of the care recipient. This empowers caregivers to be in control of where, when and how their respite happens.
• Volunteer Respite: Senior Companions Program in Davidson County matching volunteers over the age of 55 with seniors in need of a companion with caregivers in need of respite.
• Helpline: A toll free number for families and professionals that provides guidance, information and assistance. Last fiscal year, the TRC answered 849 calls to the helpline.

Documents/Resources Available
• Nonprofit Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation
• Surveys of Caregivers (outcomes and assess needs)
• Surveys of Professionals (assess needs)
• Nonprofit Committee Descriptions
• Program and Organizational Policies
• Marketing Materials and Plan
• Newsletters
• Facebook: www.facebook.com/tnrespite
• Twitter: @tnrespite
• Instagram: @tnrespite
• Video: Portraits in Caregiving
• Website: www.tnrespite.org

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