



Respite Program Case Study *Respite in the Time of COVID-19*

Indiana: Agape Respite Care, Inc.

Program Description

Agape Respite Care, Inc. is primarily an out-of-home, lifespan respite house located in Berne, Indiana. Agape has provided services for families from all over Indiana for 28 years. Care is customized to meet each family's personal and individualized needs. Services are available for individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities and those with needs acquired through an accident, illness, or aging. Agape serves approximately 50-60 families each year with some families using the services regularly and others only using the services one time.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state shelter-in-place started March 25th, 2020. However, since Agape services were identified as "essential," services continued for a short time. Agape closed on April 13th to provide time to plan, educate staff, and prepare for best practices and ensure safe care. Policies and procedures were developed to address service delivery issues and purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and individuals receiving services.

Agape respite services were reopened on May 11th once policies and procedures as well as screening protocols and orientation for DSPs and families were in place.

Planning and Guidance for Ongoing Respite Services

- **Coordinated with and maintained contact with DSPs, agency board of directors, and legal counsel** to determine planning steps, policies and procedures, and DSP training requirements. The fact that Agape is a small program, consideration was given to limiting the geographic area normally served by the program.
- **Researched COVID-19 information and resources** through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS)-Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services (BDDS), Indiana State Department of Health, Adams County Health Department, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and Governor Orders/Guidance.
- **Financial planning included several efforts:** accessing local Adams County United Way that partnered with Eli Lilly for

grant relief funds for financial stress caused by COVID-19; continuing to pay staff (administrative and Direct Service Professionals/ DSPs) during the 4 week shut down; and applying for and receiving a [Paycheck Protection Program](#) (PPP)¹ loan from the federal government on May 27th to provide assistance after the reopening.

- **Administrative staff maintained ongoing contact with families** via mail, text messaging and email to provide support and share updates around reopening and protocols.
- **Identified families with children or adults with chronic health conditions** that might put them at higher risk. Reached out by phone to discuss their specific needs and concerns.
- **Developed [Agape Policies and Procedures for Reopening](#):**
 - *Procedures for Universal Precautions & Infection Prevention for COVID-19*
 - *Temporary COVID-19 Policy & Procedures for Guest Scheduling*
 - *Temporary COVID-19 Policy & Procedures Check-In Process*
 - *Temporary COVID-19 Employee Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Travel*
- **Identified and ordered needed PPE** including cloth masks (some made locally), gloves, approved sanitizers, and face/ eye shields. Cloth masks were recommended by the CDC since Agape is considered a well care facility, and not a medical facility. Acquired a small supply of N95 masks from the local health department for specific situations.
- **Planned for how to safely use the respite program space**, including social distancing by making use of large building space and ongoing sanitizing procedures. Agape has four bedrooms and typically clients have roommates; however, during the pandemic the bedrooms were all changed to private rooms.

COVID-19 Training and Resource Dissemination

- **Conducted DSP education and training** through virtual PowerPoint presentation on universal precautions, risks, infectious diseases, using PPE, conducting temperature screening, washing hands, and COVID-19 information. A

training video showed how to use the touchless forehead thermometer, how to chart and sanitize, and where all supplies would be located as they began to return to work.

- **Verified DSP competencies** through written test and in-person observation of their skills (e.g., hand washing, sanitizing).

Reopening Procedures and Requirements

- **Prior to reopening, each family received written COVID-19 protocols** for DSPs and families.
- **Implemented DSP requirements and protocols** including wearing masks while working, temperature checks, social distancing outside of work, monitoring symptoms of themselves and household members (e.g., sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, headache or fever), following fever protocol, and greeting respite guests outside for check-in.
- **Implemented family requirements and protocols** including temperature checks, following medication administration protocol, waiting for DSPs to greet caregivers and care recipients outside for check-in, social distancing within the family's household, and reporting caregiver and care recipient symptoms (e.g., sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, headache or fever) to DSPs.
- **Addressed medication administration needs during respite** with protocol requiring that only one person who must wear a cloth face covering be permitted to come inside Agape for the check-in process.
- **Families are screened by the office manager** days before the guest is due to arrive to ensure good health and limited exposure to COVID-19 have been maintained by all members of the family. The following screening questions are sent by email:
 - Has there been any recent travel outside of Indiana?
 - Has anyone in your home tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Has there been exposure to anyone with a COVID-19 positive test?
 - Has anyone in the family had past or more recent symptoms of sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, headache or fever, or loss of taste and smell?
- **DSPs conduct temperature checks** upon arrival and document in writing.
- **Maintain social distancing during service provision** by only allowing up to 10 people in the house at the same time,

and maintaining 1:1, 1:2, or 1:3 DSP ratio depending on respite guest needs. Also, ensured strict social distancing for respite guests who are unable to tolerate masks.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **The planning process** was a challenge with daily phone calls, updates, and new considerations. Concerns included asymptomatic guests and family members, and not knowing if everyone was practicing social distancing in their households and communities.
- **Once the service was reopened**, social distancing was easily maintained due to the physical space and also the proximity to outdoor areas for activities during respite.

Respite Out-of-Home Service Continuation

- **All pandemic-related respite program changes** will stay in place for the foreseeable future.
- **Flexibility will be maintained** due to day-to-day changes and the evolution of the pandemic.
- **New travel guidance for DSPs**, including reporting travel to office manager or executive director, quarantining, and health monitoring, will be implemented.
- **Ongoing staff (administrative, DSPs) support will be provided** around new COVID-19 information and resources.
- **The Agape website will be updated** to include a more user-friendly system and design to allow greater responsiveness to staff and families and to quickly post updates, information, and resources.

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Website Link URLs

1. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program>
2. https://archrespite.org/images/COVID-19/Agape_Policies_and_Procedures_for_Re-Opening_Combined.pdf