



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

# Respite Care Association of Wisconsin – Respite Care Registry and Caregiver Respite Grant Program

### *Respite Care Registry and Caregiver Respite Grant Program Description*

The Respite Care Association of Wisconsin (RCAW) provides a statewide [respite care registry](#)<sup>1</sup> with a searchable list of respite care providers for primary caregivers to use for short breaks or support with their caregiving duties. The registry lists private in-home respite providers who have completed our free [Respite Care Certificate Program](#).<sup>2</sup> The registry also has facility-based environments and agencies that provide respite care. RCAW's [Caregiver Respite Grant Program](#)<sup>3</sup> provides financial support for family caregivers for up to five days of respite care within a 90-day period.

During COVID many of the in-home providers on the respite registry were reluctant to be in other people's homes, and caregivers were hesitant to use in-home providers. This resulted in most families opting to use community-based respite or rely on family members. Through the Caregiver Respite Grant Program, families could still apply to receive respite funds for these services or could designate that their application be put on hold until they were comfortable receiving respite.

### *Planning and Guidance for Ongoing Registry Services and Caregiver Respite Grant Program*

At the start of the pandemic, RCAW sent emails to family caregivers who had used the Caregiver Respite Grant Program, and to registry providers to determine caregiver/provider comfort levels for providing in-home respite services. Most caregivers and registry providers were uncomfortable, but stated that down the road, they would be more open to receiving respite from providers with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The RCAW Respite Care Registry stayed open during the pandemic and focused on finding reliable and credible resources and tools, providing guidance, and allaying family caregiver concerns about receiving respite services through the registry. RCAW continued to offer self-directed caregiver respite grants to help families pay for respite through their Caregiver Respite Grant Program but focused on increasing the usefulness of the respite registry.

- **Conducted internal planning** through staff discussions with statewide collaborating agencies as resources as needed.
- **Researched information and resources** through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Emergency Management, Governor Orders/Guidance, and the School of Nursing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- **Applied for funding from the COVID-19 Response Grant Program**, a new funding opportunity from the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. RCAW did not receive funding but continued with implementing identified activities, including purchasing gloves, masks, and hand sanitizer.
- **Disseminated online survey to registry providers** using SurveyMonkey platform to confirm whether individuals listed on registry wanted to remain active or not during COVID with majority not wanting to be active.
- **Collected and ordered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** for staff, registry providers, and caregivers including masks, gloves, and sanitizing gel. State grant funds were repurposed from other program activities that were cancelled due to the pandemic.

### *COVID-19 Training and Resource Dissemination*

- **Held RCAW daily webinars** starting with the March 18th state shutdown. During the first week, specific COVID-19 issues and concerns were addressed. Periodic webinars were held after that as needed.
- **Participated in/contributed to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID-19 Response Workgroups** for each of the 14 statewide Geographic Service Regions (GSRs).
- **Developed dedicated COVID-19 webpage** on the RCAW website and developed resources and new training:
  - Developed a tool for caregivers to use in the event of an emergency resulting from the pandemic: [What is Your Plan? For Caregivers – COVID-19 Worksheet](#)<sup>4</sup>

- Researched and developed a new training course: [Finding Your NEW NORMAL during COVID-19: Resources, tips, and tricks for caregivers and providers](#).<sup>5</sup> Caregivers and providers can use this online “course” to select and access information, resources, websites, and videos that address their specific needs. The COVID-19 course is a free voluntary resource for anyone to use.
- Collaborated on the development of a statewide resource [Help and Be Helped: Sources for Caregiver, People & Provider Connection](#).<sup>6</sup>

### Challenges and Opportunities

- **Participated in media interviews** via Zoom to address the current respite care challenges during COVID-19 and provided RCAW’s resources for viewers.
- **Responded to questions from families and providers** during the COVID-19 “lull” after the March 18th shutdown. As everyone slowed down, RCAW staff fielded questions and concerns from families and providers related to the status of the respite registry, how to stay safe, and what guidance and provisions would be put into place.
- **Reconfigured previously planned in-person community provider recruitment to virtual events** due to pandemic which required additional planning.
- **Planned and conducted special outreach program** for individuals who were furloughed but wanted to provide respite. Created a short-term opportunity where they could use a special modified process to be listed on the registry on a temporary basis.
- **Distributed Care for the Caregiver Kits** including word searches, stress balls, playing cards, bags of tea, chocolate, comfy socks, hand lotion, and RCAW water bottles to all of our Caregiver Respite Grant Program family caregivers with overwhelming positive response.

### Respite Registry and Caregiver Grant Program Service Continuation

- **Maintain and update RCAW COVID-19 webpage information and resources** including the *What is Your Plan* worksheet for caregivers and the *Finding Your NEW*

*NORMAL* online training. Online training curriculum will continue to be expanded around pandemic needs and other special situations.

- **Implement expedited approval for the Caregiver Respite Grant Program** for those who were **infected or affected** by COVID-19 by eliminating the requirement for supporting documentation.
- **Monitor Respite Care Registry usage** and identify and address caregiver and provider issues and concerns as they occur.
- **Increase Registry Profile Data** fields to expand search algorithms and increase matches between consumers and providers.
- **Provide ongoing supports to families and providers** through phone calls and online resources.
- **Maintain and provide PPE supplies** for staff, caregivers, and respite providers.
- **Provide state pandemic updates** as needed.

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### Respite Contact, Email and Phone Number

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<https://respitcarewi.org>

<https://respitcarewi.org/covid-19-resources>

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### Website Link URLs

1. <https://respitcarewi.org/registry>
2. <https://respitcarewi.org/training-courses/>
3. <https://respitcarewi.org/grants/caregiver-respite-grant-program-crgp>
4. <http://respitcarewi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/What-is-Your-Plan-Worksheet-1.pdf>
5. <https://respitcarewi.talentlms.com/catalog/info/id:143>
6. [https://2fc9f3a9-f51f-4a04-822b-789eb05d8015.filesusr.com/ugd/34efa6\\_9cb353aab8654a6794d7d7603f0b642a.pdf](https://2fc9f3a9-f51f-4a04-822b-789eb05d8015.filesusr.com/ugd/34efa6_9cb353aab8654a6794d7d7603f0b642a.pdf)