



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

YMCA of San Diego County: In-Home Respite Care

YMCA San Diego Special Needs Care: In-Home Respite Care Program Description

The YMCA of San Diego County provides respite for families of children and adults with special needs to give families short-term relief from the ongoing care of their child with developmental disabilities. The in-home respite care program currently serves children as young as 2 years old through older adults in their 60s. Respite is available through in-home care provided by trained YMCA staff. All referrals for respite come from the [San Diego Regional Center](#).¹ Regional service coordinators review family needs and determine eligibility and the number of respite care hours. The respite program serves approximately 1,000 families and has 370 part-time respite providers, providing an average of 10,000 respite hours per month.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-home respite services were suspended on March 16th due to the statewide stay at home order. However, families were able to access out-of-home respite provided by licensed family child care homes. These services followed California child care licensing guidelines during the pandemic.

Planning and Guidance for Reopening Respite Services

Planning efforts focused on finding reliable and credible resources and tools, planning for service reopening, training respite providers, and communicating with families. The YMCA:

- **Conducted respite service planning** through internal leadership and staff/provider discussions and coordination with the YMCA corporate office serving 19 locations in San Diego County. It was determined that the respite services were not “essential” and needed to stay closed.
- **Researched COVID-19 information and resources** through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), California Department of Public Health, San Diego County Health Department, and local guidance and resources.
- **Educated agency leadership and staff/providers about COVID-19** including pandemic health guidelines, health screening questions, and respite service policies and procedures.

- **Purchased Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for respite providers**, including cloth and disposable masks, gloves, soap, safety glasses/goggles, and hand sanitizer gel.
- **Gathered resources and information to plan for COVID-19 training** for all respite providers that was required to be completed prior to working.
- **Created COVID-19 health screening guidelines and questions** with agency legal counsel and input from state emergency and health programs. COVID-19 health screening is conducted 24 hours in advance of providing/receiving respite services. See [YMCA Health Screening Tool](#)² adapted by ARCH.
- **Reviewed health screening requirements** during respite provider training.
- **Surveyed families to determine if they wanted to use respite services.** Although 70% said they wanted to use services, a lower number are actually using services as of reopening.
- **Connected families with an immediate need for respite** to service coordinator to access other regional respite service services through the San Diego Regional Centers. The regional centers manage all county-wide service eligibility, payments, vendors, and services.
- **Reached out to families** to discuss their comfort level with precautions being taken before respite services are provided: respite provider training, sanitizing/cleaning, social distancing, and PPE for providers.
- **Created a family liability waiver**, based on legal team advice, that must be signed before receiving respite services.
- **Respite providers were given an opportunity to take voluntary leave** for 30 days.

COVID-19 Training and Resource Dissemination

- **Developed and implemented COVID-19 training for all respite providers that was required to be completed prior to working.** Topics covered included health risks, health screening and protocols, who to contact, basic procedures, reporting symptoms, exposure, social distancing, and use of PPE and protective practices and supplies. Training now available in video format.

- **Developed additional COVID-19 training around trauma informed care and self-care.** Respite providers are required to complete this training within 30 days of resuming work. Training is available in video format.

Reopening Procedures and Requirements

Respite services reopened June 11 at the end of Phase 2 for California at the same time licensed child care centers were also reopening. Even though respite services have resumed, fewer hours per month are being used by families.

- **Respite providers required to complete online COVID-19 training** prior to resuming work.
- **Respite providers required to pick up PPE** prior to resuming work at drive-through YMCA distribution locations. PPE for respite providers includes masks (cloth and disposable), gloves, soap, safety glasses/goggles, and hand sanitizer gel.
- **Respite providers advised that they can also use PPE with respite recipients** if they display symptoms requiring safety/health intervention, such as not being able or willing to wear a face mask.
- **All respite providers and families required to complete the Respite Health Screening Questionnaire** 24 hours in advance of every appointment. The health screening includes temperature checks and answering brief yes/no health questions:
 - Have you traveled out of the country in the last 14 days?
 - Do you have any of the following symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, new loss of smell or taste, etc.)
 - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
- **If a respite provider answers yes to any of the health screening questions**, they are required to isolate themselves from others, call their supervisor, contact a medical provider and get tested. In order to return to work, they must have a “return-to-work” note from a medical provider.
- **Respite providers are required to participate in additional training** within 30 days of resuming work around trauma informed care and self-care. Training is available in video format.
- **During respite, providers are required to physically distance** from all family members and, if possible, from the client (6 feet). If unable to distance, they are required to wear a mask.

- **Ongoing respite provider support available for all COVID-19 issues** including social distancing in the community, outside activities, PPE use, and following county guidelines.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Initial challenge to determine if respite was considered an “essential service”** with support and guidance from the YMCA legal team.
- **Determining pre-launch timeliness and steps to take** before reopening based on state and county guidance and requirements. Balancing act between family and provider needs and ensuring the necessary training occurred.
- **Implementing the COVID Waiver electronic paperwork**, whereas before providers would see the families in person and could easily get any required paperwork completed.
- **Developed robust provider training** that can be used in the future.

Respite Service Continuation

- **YMCA San Diego anticipates that all pandemic-related respite program changes** will remain in place for the foreseeable future.
- **Ongoing staff/provider support** around new COVID-19 information and resources will be needed.
- **Provider availability:** As of July 9, 2020, the YMCA has 115 active providers who have completed all the requirements prior to restarting services and 25 pending their CPR and other renewal requirements.

Respite Contact, Email and Phone Number

Jennifer Sanchez

jsanchez@ymca.org

619-521-3055 Est. 2409

<https://www.ymcasd.org/community-support/childcare-resource-service/family-resources/special-needs-care>

Website Link URLs

1. <http://sdr.org/>
2. https://archrespite.org/images/COVID-19/Guidelines/ARCH-Health_Screening_Policy_Form.pdf