



Finding Caregivers & Respite Providers

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Finding Caregivers

Preparation

Finding a good caregiver is often difficult. Many people decide to go out for dinner, take a quiet walk, run errands, or attend a sports activity, then consider their choices and plan for respite care. But what if you have no plan?

Planning ahead and putting in the time and effort to train individuals to care for your loved one's specific needs will give you regular respite. Over time, you will come to trust and rely on your caregiver's help. On the other hand, if you wait until an emergency or crisis develops, you will feel helpless, isolated, and overwhelmed.

In-Home Care

When you have a loved one with special needs, it is important to develop a plan so that you can have time away from the demands of parenting. _____

Before looking for caregivers, think about the type of care your family wants. Families have many choices for what care giving will be like. Evenings might be the best time for you to get respite, or perhaps a morning out. Maybe you and your family need to spend a weekend away. Your family might want a combination of all three.

You might want respite in your home, or you may prefer to find someone to care for your loved one out of your home.

In-Home Respite Care

Advantages

- You do not have to arrange transportation for your for any special equipment needed.
- Your loved one does not have to adjust to a new environment.
- Other loved ones, siblings in your family can also be cared for at the same time

Disadvantages

- Having a care provider in your home can feel like a loss of privacy.
- You may have to arrange transportation for your care providers.
- Some care providers may already care for other loved ones in their homes but may not be available to come to yours.

Finding Caregivers: Circle of Family and Friends

One way to help you think about your care recruiting plan is to consider your natural support network. You might call this network your circle of family, friends, and community programs. Consider yourself at the center of this network. Surrounding you are people from various groups. These groups interact with your family in some way to provide different levels of support. Think about your circles of support and the people in these circles.

For example, one circle is the people in your neighborhood. Who are your next-door neighbors? Who lives down the street? Do your neighbors know anyone who might be interested? What about the circles of support in your church or synagogue? A child's school? Your place of work? Are there extended family members who would be more likely to provide care if they were adequately trained? What community programs are available?

Another way to find people from your circles of family and friends is to invite other family caregivers to your home to share ideas about what worked for them. Begin by drawing the circles and labeling them. Then, think of people you may ask. You may also consider asking your service coordinator, case manager, or a child's teacher to help you in this activity. By identifying even one person from each circle, you have started a list of possible caregivers.

Circles Of Family And Friends



Finding Caregivers

Other Ways to Find Caregivers

As you move beyond your circle of friends, neighbors, family, and community programs, consider other people in your community (e.g., workers from community agencies, local universities, or a child care centers). Community agencies may maintain a list of people interested in providing care or know organizations or programs that do. A list of community groups that may be able to help you find a caregiver follows.

Resources in Your Community

The following organizations in your community may help you get in touch with caregivers:

- Child care resource and referral agencies
- Home child care providers
- Child care centers
- Schools
- Mental health/intellectual disability agencies
- Home health agencies
- Hospitals
- Civic or community groups
- Senior centers
- Recreation programs
- Faith groups
- Universities/colleges - students (may need volunteer hours or work experience to meet graduation requirements)
- Volunteer organizations
- Before/after school programs
- Camps

Choosing Potential Caregivers

Choosing Potential Caregivers

Families and caregivers choose each other for a care partnership. This takes place by a natural selection in much the same way as we choose our doctors, dentists, preschools, neighborhoods, places of worship, and friends. In making these selections, we are looking for a good match with your own values, beliefs, and ways of doing things. Families often make their choices based on special qualities they want in an individual caregiver, or a community program that offers respite through group care, such as before and after school programs, camps, or recreational activities.

Interviewing Potential Caregivers

Interviewing is an important step in choosing a caregiver or care-giving program. Take some time to think about your respite schedule and care giving needs before you begin to interview caregivers or community programs.

Many families have told us that selecting a good care provider is sometimes hard for them to do.

1. Be prepared.

One key to a more relaxed interview is to be prepared. Prepare yourself by reviewing the caregiver information. Prepare a list of questions ahead of time that will provide you with information about their education or training in CPR, first aid or other certifications they may hold. Ask the potential caregiver to describe why they are interested in providing care.

Make notes as you review the caregiver's information. What else would you like to know about the person? Do you want to know more about their experiences with children with special needs or working with older adults? You might also like to ask when a caregiver would be available to provide the care.

2. Decide how to conduct the interview.

Some parents are more comfortable doing a telephone interview first to screen potential caregivers. If, after the initial contact, you decide you want to consider a person to provide care,

You can schedule a meeting time for a face-to-face interview. You might also consider whether you would like to have your loved one present at the interview.

3. Break the ice.

A good way to begin the interview is to ask potential caregivers about their interests and experiences.

4. Ask open-ended questions.

Another good way to gain more information is to ask open-ended questions. For example, if you ask a person "Do you believe in punishing a loved one," you are asking for a response of yes or no. But, if you ask, "How do you handle difficult behavior," the person can give you much more information on their feelings and specific examples. Some sample interview questions are included on the following pages.

5. Take notes.

As a potential caregiver begins to share information, jot down some notes. Taking notes will help you to ask follow-up questions. It will be helpful to review your notes when you consider potential caregivers later. You might decide ahead of time that your spouse or partner will take notes while you ask questions or vice versa. You may want to tape the interview instead.

Sample Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions

You may wish to ask several of the following questions when you interview potential caregivers.

- Tell us about your education and/or experience in working in care giving
- Discuss your experience working with respite.
- Why are you interested in providing care services?
- Describe your strengths. How would you describe yourself?
- Why are you the right person for the job?
- What are your thoughts about families who have children with disabilities or aging adults?
- What would you do if we disagreed about something?
- If my loved one had to be taken to the hospital for an emergency, what steps would you take?
- How do you believe difficult behaviors should be managed?
- What would you do if you found a loved one with an open bottle you suspect is poison?
- Are you willing to take my loved one out on activities?
- Describe a difficult problem you've had to handle with a loved one. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about any special training or experience you might have/
- How would you know if my loved one likes a particular food or activity if he cannot speak?
- Are you willing to have a criminal background check done?
- Do you have CPR, first aid, and/or medication administration training?
- Do you have a valid driver's license?

Answering Caregivers Questions

Questions Caregivers Ask

Caregivers may ask these questions about what will be expected of the. Families should be prepared to answer them during the interview.

- Will I be expected to care for siblings as well?
- Will the parent be at home or away while I am providing care?
- If I receive a fee for my caregiver service, how will I be paid?
- How much will I be paid?
- What kind of training will I receive?
- How often will respite be needed?

After the interview

1. Reference checks

It is a good idea to check the references of potential caregivers. The respite caregiver is to provide the names of two people. You may choose to ask for more references.

2. Criminal record checks

To obtain a criminal record check on a potential respite caregiver, you can contact your state police. There may be a charge for the service. Criminal record checks are limited in the information they provide.

3. Follow-up

Be sure to thank potential caregivers for their time and explain how and when you will decide. You may say,

- We have decided to interview three people and do reference checks for each
- We hope to have a decision in one week and will let each person know of our decision by phone or by a note in the mail.

4. How to say no

Sometimes it is difficult to say no to a person. If you decide a potential caregiver is not the best person, be honest and direct, you might say,

- I was fortunate to have interviewed several qualified caregivers such as yourself and we have selected another person that we think best meets our needs.
- Thank you for your time and interest, but I don't think this would be the best match for us.

You may feel more comfortable telling a caregiver in a note, rather than over the phone.

Additional Things to Consider

Most people who want to care for your loved one are responsible and love this work. Others may not be good choices to work with your loved one.

Trust your instincts! If you are uncomfortable with a caregiver, he or she is not the right caregiver for you. Please use the following to help guide you in selecting a caregiver. There are a few things to look for when talking to caregivers that might alert you to some concerns.

A Few Other Questions To Ask

- **Why do you want to care for my loved one? What do you hope to gain from this?**
Be sure to watch body language closely. Listen for answers that make you uneasy.
- **How do you deal with stress/anger?**
There is some stress involved in any care setting. There are many different ways to handle stress, some positive, some not. Be sure you are comfortable with the answers you get.
- **Tell me about any lessons you learned from the way that you were raised that influence the way you interact while providing care.**
Often people care for individuals the same way they were raised. You may want to ask questions that get the same information: Tell me a little about yourself? If you have concerns about something a caregiver tells you about his or her childhood, ask about how it affects the ways they might take care of your loved one. Again, be sure to watch their body language.
- **Will you be taking any medicine that will affect your ability to care for my loved one? Do you have any physical limitations that might affect your ability to take care of my loved one?**
These questions might give you some information about the medical and emotional history of a caregiver. Feel free to ask a caregiver who will be taking the medications what those medications are and how they will

affect him or her. Find out if there are any side effects to the medicines and what they are. Also, talk about where medicines will be kept so that the loved one cannot get to them.

- **Tell me about how you discipline your children. How would you discipline my loved one if he were not behaving?**
Watch for answers that do not agree with the way that you want your loved one to be disciplined, especially anything that involves physical contact.

Developing Your Personalized Training Plan

Step 1. Identify training goals.

What should your caregiver learn about your child and family routines?

Step 2. List training methods.

What teaching methods will you use?

- **Modeling (showing)**
- **Videotaping (another way of showing)**
- **Shadowing (helping)**
- **Talking, telling, describing**
- **Writing (another way to tell or describe)**
- **Answering caregiver questions**
- **Sharing ideas**

Step 3. Use resources to help train caregivers.

What information will you use to help your caregiver learn?

Step 4. Evaluation

How will you and your caregiver know when your caregiver has learned a specific skill or routine?

Noticing Warning Signs

Some More Things to be Alert to When Interviewing and Screening

- **Unusual interest in your loved one's medication(s)**
Remember, a person may need to know a lot about the medication a loved one takes. But if a caregiver's questions do not seem to relate to understanding your loved one, you may have some concerns.
- **Curiosity about where liquor or firearms are kept in the house**
Again, a caregiver may be asking these questions because they want to keep your loved one safe. However, if caregivers want to know where keys to the liquor/gun cabinets are kept, you may need to ask why they need that information.
- **References cannot give positive information about a caregiver**
- **Caregiver wants to care for a loved one only of a specific age or gender**
If a caregiver states such a preference, ask why. Watch body language!

Watch Your Loved one For Signs

Things to Look for After Care Has Started

There are few signs to watch for in your loved one after care has started that may be signs that he is poorly treated in respite.

- Eating a lot less or a lot more
- Sleeping a lot less or a lot more
- Unusual fear of adults
- Sexually acting out with younger children or toys
- Increased violence or anger
- Rashes and bruises and/or torn clothes or underwear

A Few Final Words

It is very important that you feel comfortable with your caregiver. If the answers to any question makes you uneasy (even if it is the answer to only one question), then that person is probably not the right provider for your loved one. Your instincts might give you the strongest clue about how well a caregiver will work for you and your family. Trust yourself.

Evaluating Your Respite Decision

Summary

Now that you have finished recruiting, screening, and interviewing, you are ready to select your respite caregiver.

Consider these questions about respite caregiver(s) you have selected:

- Will she/he feel comfortable caring for your loved one with special needs?
- Will she/he be willing to spend time learning how to care for your loved one?
- Will she/he be willing to learn about your family?
- Will she/he be warm, affectionate, and enjoy loved one?
- Will she/he have respect for your beliefs and values?
- Does she/he have good character references?

This document and other tools can be found at:
www.familyconnectionsc.org under >Programs >Respite

Or contact wchoecke@familyconnectionsc.org
1-800-578-8750