



Volunteer Respite: Roadmap to Resources



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Introduction

Respite is temporary relief for family caregivers from the ongoing responsibility of caring for an individual of any age with special needs. Any activity or time that provides safety, security, and care for loved ones with special needs, while also providing meaningful relief for the family caregiver, can be considered respite. The array of respite program models and services offer many opportunities for volunteers to contribute their time and talents.

Explore information and resources for recruiting, screening, training, and retaining volunteers to provide respite services to caregiving families in various settings. For a more in-depth discussion of these topics, and a step-by-step guide to starting a volunteer respite program, please see the [*ARCH Volunteer Respite Manual: Creating Valuable Options for Family Caregivers*](#).

Types of Volunteer Respite Opportunities

Respite can be provided in-home or out-of-home, with various types of providers and environments. Through the use of volunteers, respite programs can stretch limited resources to provide services to more family caregivers and care recipients. With appropriate training and staff supervision, volunteers can support almost any respite model and fulfill many roles.

Respite programs most frequently offer respite volunteer opportunities to provide direct care services to care recipients across the lifespan.

In addition to direct care volunteer respite roles, volunteers may provide program support by organizing and overseeing respite activities.

Volunteers may provide direct care and also carry out a variety of other tasks in programs such as day or overnight camps for individuals with special needs, adult day services, after-school programs, and park and recreation programs. Even facility-based respite, which can take place in residential facilities, crisis nurseries, group homes, assisted living, and nursing homes may be able to use volunteer support on some level.

Volunteers have potential to support many innovative models for respite program expansion and services. Examples include:

- **Activity/Event Respite:** Hosting a group event for individuals with special needs can offer a respite break for family caregivers. Volunteers can support and implement event respite programming. Respite events such as an afternoon of horseback riding for children with autism, or a lunch program for those with dementia, can provide a much-needed break for family caregivers.

- **Mentoring Programs:** Mentoring programs match volunteers with a care recipient. In this model, volunteers provide support, guidance, and activities for the care recipient. The mentor's time with the care recipient provides respite for the caregiver.
- **Respite Cooperative:** In cooperative (co-op) respite models, family caregivers collaborate to provide respite for each other. Members of the co-op organize amongst themselves to determine how and where the respite program will operate. Families generally train each other on the needs of their care recipients and use different strategies for tracking respite "exchanges."

Volunteers can fulfill additional program support roles to increase respite care program capacity. For example, volunteers can provide:

- Support to paid respite providers, such as:
 - Transporting family caregivers or care recipients to and from the program (increased liability insurance recommended)
 - Running errands (e.g., shopping and delivering supplies to the respite provider)
 - Providing encouragement and support to the respite provider
 - Providing back-up to the respite provider
 - Sorting and cataloging respite program supplies, or other needed items
- Administrative support, such as:
 - Organizing mailing lists and mailings
 - Writing program newsletters

- Serving as a receptionist
- Recruiting additional volunteers
- Providing back-up clerical support
- Organizing or sponsoring special events for the care recipients or family caregivers
- Support with fundraising and public awareness, such as:
 - Organizing special events
 - Assisting with capital campaigns
 - Soliciting supplies and donations from businesses and organizations.

Using volunteers to provide respite care and supports can help expand respite opportunities. Even so, programs need to consider that there are staff responsibilities for recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers that require ongoing staff time and resources.

Respite Cooperative: Epworth Children's Home

The Respite Cooperative Program provides members with free site-based monthly respite for caregivers of children with special needs, ages 1-12. Parents register for the co-op and take turns serving as one of the volunteer caregivers for the respite event. In exchange, parents can use the respite events for their children with special needs and their siblings. *Contact:* Epworth Early Intervention Center, Columbia, SC; Phone: 803-681-0212. Visit the [Website](#).

Event Respite: Easterseals DC-MD-VA Community Respite Program

The Robert S. Wilson, Jr. Community Respite Program, a service of Easterseals DC-MD-VA, offers free monthly respite days for wounded warriors, veterans, active-duty military, first responders, and civilian families, and families of children with and without disabilities ages 6 months to 10 years old. Respite days take place one Saturday a month and can involve entertainers and a variety of other engaging hands-on activities. These respite days support children and their families by providing one-on-one interactions between children and trained volunteers. Easterseals staff recruit volunteers to accompany each child through the event day activities so that there is a 1:1 volunteer-to-child ratio. Prior to each respite day event, Easter Seals staff select which volunteer will be paired with which child for the day based on their needs, personalities, and family dynamics. Easterseals staff provide each volunteer with an informational packet about their matched child and prepare volunteers to meet the matched child and his/her family. *Contact:* Respite Services, Easterseals DC-MD-VA; respite@eseal.org; Phone: 301-588-8700. Visit the [Website](#).

What Do Volunteer Respite Programs Look Like?

Volunteer respite programs occur in many different community-based settings, and volunteer roles vary accordingly. A variety of models of local volunteer and community-based respite exist in different settings. In some programs, volunteers are the mainstay of the program; in others, they provide critical backup and administrative support. The following programs illustrate the breadth of volunteer opportunities in respite.

In-home Respite for Adults

Some examples are:

Respite Volunteers of Shiawassee is an interfaith nonprofit agency that connects trained volunteers from local churches and the community with families who live in Shiawassee County, Michigan. Trained volunteers help those caring for an adult in their home by providing regularly scheduled weekly visits with one-on-one time and companionship, giving the caregiver respite and the opportunity to run errands, attend medical appointments, or engage in other activities that will enable them to come back to their loved one refreshed and renewed. *Contact:* Respite Volunteers of Shiawassee, Owosso, MI; Phone: 989-725-1127. Visit the [Website](#).

Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey offers an Alzheimer's Respite Care Program that provides weekly, in-home respite care for people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. A careful process matches respite volunteers with caregivers, including matches with bilingual volunteers. The matching process, along with ongoing support and training for volunteers, results in quality services, improved quality of life among caregivers, and strong relationships between volunteers and families. This program has been recognized by ARCH as an [Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service](#). *Contact:* Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey, Tom's River, NJ; Phone: 732-505-2273. Visit the [Website](#).



In-home Respite for Children

The following program provided respite in-home, but volunteers also occasionally took children out into the community for social activities, with parental permission.

The **Watson Institute's CareBreak** program provided respite to families of children with special needs through careful screening, training, and matching of volunteers from 1997-2017 in western Pennsylvania. The CareBreak volunteer respite model has been replicated in over 30 sites throughout the United States and territories and offers permission for use or adaptation of all forms and materials. This model has an evidenced-informed base of practices and has been successfully used to support individuals of different ages and disabilities. *Contact:* [MaryJo Caruso](#). For more information view the ARCH webinar on [Volunteer Respite – Putting the Pieces Together: Implementation from Recruitment to Matching](#).

Volunteer-Supported Respite Events

Some community-based respite programs use volunteers to increase their capacity to provide respite.

Respite Care, Inc. in Fort Collins, CO, provides short-term care for children with developmental disabilities and respite to their families enhancing their quality of life. Respite Care, Inc. relies on volunteers to provide one-on-one engagement and to support field trips and summer day camp program activities. Although professional staff provide respite care, volunteers enable day camps to operate. In the day camp program, a group of two program staff and eight trained volunteers lead a group of 8-10 children on trips into the community for recreation. Volunteers also provide yoga, art, music therapy, nutrition education, and other recreational programs at no cost. As a member of Directors of Volunteers in Agencies, Respite Care, Inc. collaborates with other volunteer managers to research and discuss best practices in volunteer management. This program has been recognized by ARCH as an [Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service](#). *Contact:* Respite Care, Inc., Fort Collins, CO; Phone: 970-207-9435. Visit the [Website](#).



National Volunteer Program: Timebanking

Timebanking is an economic paradigm centered on meeting needs through community engagement and collaboration based on shared strengths. Timebanking functions much like a volunteer program in that an individual's time and skills are freely given, but it is a time-based currency. For each hour that an individual gives in service to another, the volunteer receives a time credit. Time credits in turn can be used to receive services or they can be donated to others. Timebanking is in use in countries around the world. Many communities utilize Timebanking to provide respite and caregiver support. In 2014, the Hawaii Lifespan Respite program developed a [Timebanking Feasibility Study](#) to share how Timebanking can be used for respite care. Learn more about Timebanking for respite in the ARCH webinar, [Timebanking for Respite: Communities Supporting Caregivers](#). Visit timebanks.org.

Respite Serving Diverse Populations

Cultural experiences define how care recipients and caregivers receive information, how they make choices, and what their family preferences are for respite care. By understanding the care recipient's and the family caregiver's needs and values, cultural competency enables respite volunteers to provide effective and respectful care. The following programs provide examples of culturally competent volunteer-based respite to serve the needs of diverse populations.

Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) is a partnership of faith-based communities and other local organizations that collaborate to provide volunteer respite care and other services for caregivers in Chicago's Western suburbs. Although the program is open to all community members, the program particularly focuses on meeting the needs of the African American and Latinx communities. CTLB is overseen by AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) of suburban Cook County, Illinois. In addition to volunteer-based respite, the program also offers an evidence-based caregiver training program to reduce caregiver stress and increase capacity

to provide support to their loved one. *Contact:* CTLB Caregiver Coordinator, AgeOptions, Oak Park, IL. 708-383-0258. Visit the [Website](#).

Volunteers of America of Minnesota and Wisconsin's Culturally Responsive Caregiver Support and Dementia Services serves African American and East African older adults and family caregivers. Caregivers are eligible for support if they are caring for an adult 60+ years of age or an individual (of any age) with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. Volunteers provide respite for caregivers during the program's monthly caregiver support groups, which offer an environment for caregivers to share and support one another. The program prioritizes recruiting respite volunteers who speak Oromo and Somali languages. *Contact:* Volunteers of America of Minnesota and Wisconsin, Minneapolis, MN; 952-945-4016. Visit the [Website](#). [Brochure](#).

Successful Volunteer Recruitment Strategies

Successful respite program volunteer recruitment begins with engaging a potential candidate and results in an appropriate, beneficial, and rewarding volunteer placement.

The following are general strategies for volunteer recruitment:

- Ask current volunteers to recruit other volunteers, including friends and family members
- Ask family caregivers/parents to refer potential volunteers – often caregivers are connected to people who are interested in providing respite care or know someone
- Reach out to local civic associations
- Advertise in newspapers, magazines, and other local publications
- Use community respite program or agency social media channels (i.e., Facebook, Instagram)
- Connect with AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program, and other local volunteer match organizations
- Host regular information sessions and orientations in a variety of locations and settings
- Reach out to local networking groups (e.g., women's professional groups, sororities, fraternities,

neighborhood associations, teachers' groups, Junior League, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce)

- Build community partnerships with other organizations and nonprofit agencies, such as United Way, Community Shares, and refer volunteers to each other.
- Distribute respite program brochures and flyers through email lists and posting in the community (e.g., community agencies, state agencies, bulletin boards, libraries)
- Attend volunteer fairs and other local community events serving the target populations

- Contact faith communities (see ARCH Fact Sheet [Respite and the Faith Community](#)).

Recruiting Specific Groups of Volunteers

Volunteer program managers and recruiters must clearly understand the role of volunteers within the respite program.

Students

Student volunteers can be both beneficial for respite programs and meaningful for students. Students who work with a volunteer respite program gain the opportunity to explore a potential career field (e.g.,

Respite Using Student Volunteers

Claude Moore Precious Time

Claude Moore Precious Time, in Harrisonburg, VA, is a pediatric respite care program that creates mutually beneficial relationships between caregivers and students to offer individualized, trust-based respite care. Claude Moore Precious Time works with the James Madison University College of Health and Behavioral Studies to match nursing and health and human service students as respite care providers for children with special needs, disabilities, or special healthcare needs. The program also focuses on reaching underserved populations in rural parts of Virginia. The training provided to student respite care providers focuses on graduating confident, knowledgeable, and experienced health care professionals with a more comprehensive understanding of children with special needs and their families. Claude Moore This program has been recognized by ARCH as an [Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service](#). *Contact:* Program Director, Claude Moore Precious Time, Harrisonburg, VA; Phone: 540-568-3280. Visit the [Website](#).



CareBreaks – Nursing Student Respite Workforce Initiative

The Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (OHA), with funding from the Lifespan Respite Care Program, collaborates with five in-state college and university nursing programs, Catholic Social Services of RI, and Healthcentric Advisors, to offer a respite program that trains nursing students to provide free volunteer respite. Student volunteers provide in-home and weekly group respite for caregivers of children and adults with long-term disabilities or medical needs. Programs recruit nursing students as volunteers or as a part of clinical coursework. Faculty train and prepare students to provide respite, review caregiver applications and conduct home visits, and match students with their respite families. Nursing program faculty also supervise the students.

Catholic Social Services of RI (CSSRI) manages the OHA's CareBreaks program, the state's copay respite program for people of all ages, which serves as the referral source for nursing student placements. The CareBreaks program offers families the option to apply for a volunteer nursing student to provide respite at no cost. [Watch a video](#) about the program and see the [Replication Toolkit](#). This program has been recognized by ARCH as an [Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service](#).

education, recreation, social work, psychology, nursing, health care), gain field experience to build their resume, and hone skills. Volunteering offers students a connection to the larger community outside of their campus. Volunteer hours may also count for course credit, extra class credit, or fulfill a community service requirement.

Respite programs that work with student volunteers often find that they possess fresh perspectives, flexible schedules, high energy, and an eagerness to learn. Student volunteers may have basic knowledge and skill sets related to their studies. For example, a psychology student volunteer may be a great match for a family caring for a loved one with autism, dementia, or a mental health diagnosis. A nursing program student may be great paired with a camp respite program or a family caring for someone with a medical condition.

Use the following tips and strategies for recruiting students for volunteer respite opportunities:

- Reach out to local community colleges and/or universities to connect with the community outreach or volunteer office and to inquire if they host volunteer or other community fairs.
- Contact a local high school principal's or college dean's office for guidance on contacting department faculty who may be interested in recommending students for volunteer opportunities.
- Request to present at school orientations for new students. Note that these opportunities typically occur at the beginning of each semester.
- Partner with local schools' professors who might be willing to offer extra credit for volunteering.
- Request to present to school-based groups focused on providing community services.
- Reach out to human service undergraduate, graduate, and internship programs in human services (e.g., education, social work, psychology, physical therapy, and others)
- Hire and train a part-time student volunteer recruiter for a local campus.
- Reach out to professional student organizations such as [HOSA-Future Health Professionals](#) or [Area Health Education Centers \(AHEC\)](#). Most states have local chapters of these.

For more information, listen to the [ARCH Conversations on Caregiving podcasts](#) on student respite volunteers.

Watch the ARCH Volunteer and Faith-based Learning Collaborative presentation on [Students as Respite Volunteers: A Creative Approach to Supporting Family Caregivers](#).

Retirees

Retired professionals provide an excellent source of volunteers with much to offer. In addition to years of work experience, baby boomers often have flexible time schedules as well as the desire to give back to their community. They are often looking for a way to use their expertise to fulfill a community need. When recruiting baby boomer volunteers, marketing recruitment efforts as “opportunities to apply skills” may be much more effective than “recruiting volunteers.” Meaningful opportunities to work alongside regular paid staff can also present an attractive recruitment strategy.

Word-of-mouth recruiting can be highly effective. Their ability to spread the word among their social circles, professional groups, and neighborhoods can prove helpful in volunteer recruiting efforts.

Recruit baby boomers for volunteer opportunities through marketing at the following locations:

- *Restaurants:* Table displays, restroom ads, or community bulletin boards postings can be a great way to reach boomers at their favorite eatery.

AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program

AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program brings together volunteers age 55 and over with adults in their community who have difficulty with daily living tasks. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or making a friendly visit. Senior Companions volunteer an average of 20 hours a week and typically serve between two and four clients. Eligible volunteers receive a modest stipend. Other benefits include training, accident, personal liability, and excess automobile liability insurance as well as community recognition. Visit the [Website](#). Watch the [ARCH webinar](#).

- *Golf courses:* Consider leaving literature about a volunteer respite program at golf pro shops or at golf course restaurants, or host a golf tournament to raise money for a respite program.
- *Airports:* Boomers comprise a large section of the traveling community. Airport eateries, restrooms, check-ins, baggage claims, and airport shuttles are good places to market respite program volunteer opportunities. Also, carry brochures/cards for distribution while travelling.
- *Health settings:* Boomers are one of the first generations to continue fitness into their later years. Many health-related facilities (e.g., dentists' and doctors' offices, pharmacies, therapy centers, fitness clubs, recreation centers) provide opportunities to leave information about a respite organization and its volunteer needs.

Professional Field

Volunteers with professional skills in the health care or nonprofit sector (e.g., social workers, nurses) can be a great asset for respite programs. However, recruiting skilled volunteers can be challenging because volunteers may not want to volunteer using the same skills that they apply at their full-time job. On the other hand, volunteers may enjoy volunteering within their profession if volunteering uses a skillset they wish to use more often. For example, a nursing home administrator may be skilled in nursing, but completes administrative work for the majority of the workday. A volunteer role providing direct respite care may allow them to use their nursing skills and feel satisfaction from the impact that their skills provide in the respite setting.

Here are useful tips on recruiting respite volunteers with professional skillsets.

- Market through professional associations. For example, request to speak at a local chapter meeting for the National Association of Social Workers.
- Advertise in or publish an educational article in a publication for professionals with a targeted skillset. Another option is to work with community newspapers and/or magazines created for professionals.
- Speak with an individual working in a profession that your respite organization needs for volunteers (e.g., therapist, nurse, social worker, educator) regarding

how to market volunteer opportunities to other professionals like them.

Faith Community

Faith communities can provide many resources and connections that prove helpful in a volunteer respite program. Often members of faith communities have a desire to help others. Most faith communities have a strong volunteerism culture, with ministries and programs that are already volunteer-based and volunteer-led.

Here are some suggestions to work with faith communities and the valuable resources they offer:

- Consider using personal connections to initiate a volunteer respite partnership. This could be a family in the faith community who needs respite or a member interested in or already involved in providing respite.
- Recruit volunteers from groups within the faith community. Some examples include supper clubs, special ministry groups, specific outreach groups, youth groups, etc.
- Knowing the faith community's calendar and membership demographic will aid volunteer recruitment timing and strategy. For example, congregations with many young families may relate best to volunteer respite opportunities with families with children that have special needs.

For more information and examples of faith-based respite models, see the ARCH Fact Sheet [Respite and the Faith Community](#) and [Resources for Volunteer and Faith-Based Respite](#).

Screening, Selecting, Matching and Placing Volunteers

Once an individual has indicated an interest in volunteer work, an organization may use the following procedures to screen and select volunteers.

Host Volunteer Information Sessions

Meet with interested individuals to discuss the volunteer program and determine interest in the respite program. This helps to ensure volunteer candidates' placement and retention in satisfying roles. At a minimum, a volunteer information session should include:

- The respite program's history and services

- Volunteer positions available, with role descriptions that identify required knowledge and skills
- The organization's minimum expectations for volunteers
- Any required volunteer training or orientation sessions
- Time for questions

Have Interested Volunteers Complete a Volunteer Application

The volunteer application gathers important information essential for volunteer placement. A volunteer application should include:

- Areas of volunteer interest
- Professional experience and expertise
- Previous experience with respite population being served
- Professional references related to volunteer's past work and volunteer experience and personal integrity
- Background checks regarding criminal background and/or child abuse complaints filed against the individual

Volunteer background checks protect respite program consumers. Background checks also help to verify the truthfulness of information provided on an initial application. In most states, it is possible to check a person's criminal background through the local or state police for a small fee. Program staff should screen for evidence of crimes against people (e.g., domestic violence, sexual violence, assault). Program staff should also check driving records for volunteers who will transport consumers. For more information on background checks, see the Resources section of this fact sheet.

Conduct Volunteer Interviews

As a follow up for information collected on the application, interview each volunteer candidate. Interviews determine a volunteer's match for specific volunteer positions and organizational needs based on job descriptions. When interviewing candidates for general volunteering, discuss what makes the most sense for both the organization and volunteer.

Ideally, programs should strive to find a volunteer position for all interested and qualified applicants. In the unlikely event that there are no openings for an

individual, inform the applicant that the application may be filed for future needs.

Establish a Volunteer Agreement

After selecting volunteers, many programs establish and recommend a simple written contract or agreement between the organization and the volunteers. For example, many programs request a one-year minimum volunteer commitment. The volunteer agreement outlines the specific terms of the volunteer's commitment, including:

- Volunteers' duties, role, and schedule
- Expectations and role of the organization
- Requirements for termination

Match Volunteers to Care Recipients and their Family Caregivers

Thoughtful matching of volunteers to care recipients and their families has been shown to be a significant predictor of a successful volunteer placement. Matching volunteers with care recipients and family caregivers is based on factors such as their interests and skill sets, their schedule and availability, and whether they can effectively meet the needs of the family looking for support. Some respite volunteers have a certain preference for the population they want to be engaged with (e.g., children, older adults, individuals with disabilities). Consideration of cultural and language preferences of the care recipient and family caregiver is also critical. Taking these preferences seriously and tailoring experiences to volunteers' preferences will make them feel as though they are an important part of your organization and may help keep volunteers satisfied in their roles for longer periods, and help families derive greater benefits from the respite experience. Read more on volunteer assignments and matching in the ARCH [*Volunteer Respite Manual*](#) (pages 39-40).

Training Respite Volunteers

Effective volunteer training is critical for a successful respite volunteer program. Once volunteers have been selected and assigned duties, the next step is training volunteers. Volunteer training enhances skills, clarifies volunteer expectations, and reduces program risk. Training can also ensure that volunteers enjoy

their experience and continue to engage in volunteer activities.

Every new program volunteer should receive new employee pre-service training, which includes the following topics:

- Organization's history
- Overview of the organization's services
- General information about family caregivers, respite needs, and benefits of respite care
- Specific education on the health conditions and/or special needs of the care recipient(s)
- Volunteer program's liability and risk management policies
- Basic volunteer responsibilities
- Confidentiality requirements
- Basic first aid, including CPR and universal precaution training
- Basic communication and boundary-setting skills
- How to detect signs of abuse or neglect.

Respite Programs Matching Volunteers to Families

The Center for Volunteer Caregiving

The Center for Volunteer Caregiving has a 22-year history providing in-home respite to caregivers of adults with physical disabilities, dementia and memory conditions, chronic illness, and special medical needs. Services are available at no cost to families by more than 50 volunteers providing more than 2,000 hours of respite yearly. Person- and family-centered services begin with a thorough in-home, intake assessment and interview that guide a matching process. Personal and practical information are used to inform case management, anticipatory guidance, and referrals to additional services so that family services are both comprehensive and preventive. In addition to employing a matching process that is supportive of both families and volunteers, volunteers – ranging in age from 18 to 92 years – are made to “feel part of a community” through educational and social activities. Several volunteers have been with The Center for Volunteer Caregiving for 15 years. This program has been recognized by ARCH as an *Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service*. *Contact:* The Center for Volunteer Caregiving, Cary, NC; caregiving@ctrvolcare.org, Phone: 919-460-0567. Visit the [Website](#).

Caregiver Respite Services at Lifespan of Greater Rochester

Caregiver Respite Services at Lifespan of Greater Rochester, New York, serves persons living with

Alzheimer's disease, other dementias or chronic illness and their friends and families by supporting and empowering caregivers, people living with dementia or chronic illness, and volunteers.

The Partners in Caring Respite Program matches trained volunteers with caregivers of those with early stage dementia or noticeable forgetfulness. Using a clearly defined match process including conducting caregiver interviews and assessments, and identifying care recipient and volunteer characteristics and interests, the program supports friend and family care partners. Powerful Tools for Caregivers along with a variety of education workshops are offered as part of a family-centered approach. Volunteer training and support includes Alzheimer's Association sponsored training as well as training in policies and procedures, job roles and responsibilities, and ways to interact socially given symptoms associated with Alzheimer's and dementia.

This program has been recognized by ARCH as an *Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service*. *Contact:* Volunteer Respite: Partners in Caregiving Respite Program, Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Rochester, NY; Phone: 585-244-8400 x246.

Also, Lifespan of Greater Rochester operates a drop-in respite program, ROC Respite, which meets weekly at the Phyllis Wheatley Library. *Contact:* ROC Respite Drop-in, Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Rochester, NY: 585-244-8400 x261. Visit the [Website](#).



Training needed beyond pre-service training will vary by volunteer position. Programs should develop training on the knowledge and skills required for each volunteer role, as would be available for paid staff.

A comprehensive volunteer training program provides:

- Job descriptions for each volunteer role
- Training regarding the knowledge and skills needed to perform the volunteer role
- Methods for evaluating and providing feedback on how effectively the training prepared volunteers for duties
- Ongoing support and supervision

When volunteers provide direct respite care services, it is important for respite programs to provide comprehensive volunteer training and role descriptions, as well as ongoing support and supervision. Programs that serve individuals with more complex needs (e.g., children with complex medical needs, adults with disabilities, elderly care recipients with later stages of dementia) may require more highly trained individuals to provide respite.

When a volunteer provides in-home respite, the care recipient's family can participate in the volunteer's training. Family members can provide training on the care recipient's specific needs, preferences, and important aspects of the home environment. Guidebooks that help family caregivers choose respite providers often have guidance on how to prepare the respite provider to meet the unique needs of their family members. Links to these guidebooks can be found in the article [How to Choose a Respite Provider](#) on the ARCH website.

ARCH/NASHP/RCAW Respite Provider Recruitment and Training Project

ARCH partnered with the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) and the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin to develop and field test a competency-based online training curriculum for entry level respite providers and volunteers. It is available at no charge to the general public in select states. Additional states are invited to participate in offering the training. [Read more about the initiative](#) and [review the training](#).

Volunteer Retention

Volunteer turnover rates is one of the most common problems that volunteer programs must address. Providing ongoing supervision, support, and training of volunteers, as well as volunteer recognition events, will help retain volunteers.

Supervision and Support

Supportive supervision, combined with the experience of making a difference, builds volunteer commitment to the respite program. Ongoing volunteer supervision provides support, prevents burnout, and allays volunteer's fears of making a mistake. The volunteer supervisor can work with the volunteer to identify the volunteer's personal goals, the skills that they bring to the program, and the skills that they want to develop. Volunteer supervisors may also assist volunteers to set any necessary boundaries for their volunteer experience. Supervisors also provide volunteers with direction in working with family caregivers and care recipients.

One way to prevent volunteer turnover is by providing opportunities for volunteers to change roles. Volunteers who have been serving in the same capacity for a long period may be vulnerable to burnout. This is particularly true for volunteers providing direct service work. In these scenarios, the supervisor can talk with the volunteers about moving to another role or use a needs assessment or interest survey to identify a new role within the respite program.

Retaining Volunteers through Matching

Volunteer matching was described above as an important predictor of a quality volunteer respite experience for the care recipient and family, but it is also important for retaining volunteers for continuous reliable respite care. Careful matching of care recipients' interests and needs to those of volunteers helps foster strong, caring, and lasting relationships between volunteers and families.

General Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers want to feel appreciated for both their donation of time and the skills they bring to the respite program. Whether volunteers continue beyond the initial commitment often depends on their perception of their volunteer experience, including impressions of how the program values them and their work. Volunteer

recognition events communicate the importance and value of volunteers and their work.

Volunteer recognition events should be planned on a regular basis. In addition to volunteer recognition events, provide ongoing volunteer appreciation. The following are general suggestions to show ongoing recognition to volunteers:

- Learn volunteers' names and personally thank them
- Send handwritten notes of gratitude from staff and/or clients
- Give small, handmade gifts
- Award certificates of recognition or other organizational awards
- Recognize the volunteer to their friends, families, and employers
- Publish a regular "thank you" column in the organization's newsletter, emails, or other publications
- Host appreciation events during the April National Volunteer Month

Volunteer Recognition for Specific Groups

Recruiting specific volunteer demographics (e.g., students, retirees, trained professionals) brings a breadth of volunteer skills and experience to the organization and respite program. Program managers can retain these volunteers by adapting their volunteer recognition strategy for each group. Here are ideas to recognize each group of volunteers.

Student Volunteers

- Provide care packages during finals with toiletries, snacks, or other necessities
- Offer educational opportunities that students can use to build their resumes
- Offer opportunities to attend meetings, planning sessions, and/or staff trainings to further students' professional development
- Recognize students among professors, families, and peers
- Give gift cards for grocery stores, convenience stores, or gas stations
- Write letters of recommendation for future opportunities.

Professional Field Volunteers

- Offer educational trainings and CEU credit when available
- Provide opportunities to attend conferences or other professional workshops
- Invite volunteers to join management team meetings, strategic planning sessions, or other staff opportunities
- Recognize them among peers and colleagues
- Provide small gifts related to volunteers' hobbies or activities.

Risk Management for Volunteer Programs

Risk management should be part of every volunteer program's planning and implementation. Risk management measures should correlate to organization size and capacity. Each volunteer program can take precautions to avoid risk. For more information, see ARCH [Risk Management Fact Sheet](#).

The [Nonprofit Risk Management Center](#) is a nonprofit resource center that provides technical assistance to nonprofit staff members, volunteers, and leaders on a wide range of risk management, liability, and insurance topics. The Center also offers risk management software; practical publications on safety, insurance, and liability topics; and numerous training opportunities. For risk management advice, call 703-777-3504 or email info@nonprofitrisk.org. Learn about the [VolunteerProtect! Mobile App](#).

Volunteer Insurance

Given the nature of work involved in volunteer respite, it is a good idea for organizations to secure insurance coverage for respite program volunteers. This additional coverage is especially important for volunteers who transport care recipients.

The average cost for volunteer insurance ranges from \$10-15 per volunteer per year. The following companies provide volunteer insurance:

- [CIMA Volunteers Insurance Service](#) (VIS). View a [printable brochure](#).
- [Philadelphia Insurance Company, Volunteer Accident Insurance](#)

For more information on volunteer insurance, see the [ARCH Volunteer Respite Manual: Creating Valuable Options for Family Caregivers](#).

Liability for Specific Volunteers

It is important for respite programs to be aware of the type and amount of insurance coverage that their volunteers hold. Volunteers are sometimes covered under general liability coverage. Volunteer program managers can verify coverage terms with their organization's insurance policy or agent.

Student volunteers may hold liability coverage through their college or university, in which case additional insurance may not be necessary. Volunteer program managers may find more information by contacting the office of risk management at each student volunteer's school.

Skilled volunteers may hold professional liability coverage as an individual within their profession. Volunteer managers can verify if their volunteer professional liability coverage applies to their current volunteer situation.

Volunteer Respite Costs and Benefits

Respite program volunteers bring many benefits. Volunteers, if effectively recruited, trained, placed, and retained, can help build capacity by increasing the number of family caregivers served with respite.

In addition, the monetary value of volunteer time can be used as match funds for some grants, or to support the organization's capacity in proposals to funders. According to Independent Sector, a national organization of United States nonprofits, foundations, and corporations that work for social change, the average value for a volunteer's time in 2023 was \$31.80 per hour. See [State-by-state values for volunteer time](#). The monetary value of volunteers can be important for organizations to track.

Despite the great value respite volunteers provide, respite organizations must consider programmatic and administrative costs to implement volunteer programs. Volunteer program management, screening, training, supervision, recognition, and evaluation are just a few of the costs associated with these programs. Additional

liability and insurance considerations must also be considered.

Resources

Volunteer Management Support

- **ARCH Resource Library.** Visit the ARCH website's [Resource Library](#) to search for volunteer resources.
- The [ARCH Volunteer Respite Manual: Creating Valuable Options for Family Caregivers](#) is a comprehensive resource for volunteer programs including planning and operations, recruitment, orientation and training, management, retention, policies and procedures, liability and insurance issues, and marketing. Volunteer resources are included in the Appendices.
- **Energ!ze.** A program of [Adisa](#) that provides resources on multiple aspects of volunteer management, including funding, evaluation, training, and useful software. Visit the [Website](#).
- **Idealist.** A nonprofit organization, Idealist serves as an international clearinghouse of nonprofit and volunteer resources and opportunities. Visit the [Website](#).
- **National Council of Nonprofits.** The Council is a network of nonprofits and provides valuable resources on nonprofit topics including [managing volunteers](#). Their state associations may offer workshops and webinars on volunteer topics and may know of local nonprofits looking for assistance. [Find an affiliated state association](#).

State and National Programs

- **AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program** brings together senior volunteers with adults in their community who have difficulty with daily living tasks. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or making a friendly visit. Senior Companions volunteer an average of 20 hours a week and typically serve between two and four clients. Visit the [Website](#).
- **AmeriCorps State and National** supports a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. Visit the [Website](#).
- **AmeriCorps VISTA** provides full-time members to community organizations and public agencies to

create and expand programs that build capacity and ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. Visit the [Website](#).

- **Civic Engagement Initiative, Administration on Aging (AoA), Administration for Community Living (ACL).** Volunteers have always been the backbone of programs administered under the Older Americans Act. Volunteers provide help by delivering meals to home-bound older adults; providing transportation to health care services; assisting with grocery shopping; and helping during disasters. AoA's Civic Engagement section offers volunteering opportunities. Visit the [ACL Website](#).
- **National Community Care Corps (CCC)** is a national program that fosters and funds innovative local models in which volunteers provide nonmedical assistance to family caregivers, older adults, or adults with disabilities in order to maintain their independence. Visit the [Website](#).
- **State Lifespan Respite Programs.** States are funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) to implement statewide systems of coordinated community-based respite for family caregivers caring for individuals with special needs of all ages. The grantees and their partners enhance respite services and many state programs recruit and train respite workers, including volunteers, and often support migrants to community and faith-based programs to expand volunteer respite. The [ARCH website offers contact information](#) for each state program.
- The **Support Team Network**, led by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), is a training and resource center for the development of volunteer Community Support Teams for persons with health concerns or other special needs. Visit the [Website](#).
- **VolunteerMatch** strengthens communities by making it easier for people and causes to connect. Visit the [Website](#).

Cultural and Linguistic Competence

- **Diverse Elders Coalition (DEC)** advocates for policies and programs that improve aging in communities as racially and ethnically diverse people; American Indians and Alaska Natives; and lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people. Visit the [Website](#) and [Family Caregiving in Diverse Communities: Addressing](#)

[The Needs Of Diverse Family Caregivers For Older Adults](#).

- The **LGBT Aging Center's** manual [Serving Diverse Elders: Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Service Planning and Delivery](#) provides tools and resources to be more inclusive of culturally diverse populations of older adults.
- **National Center on Cultural Competence (NCCC)** – Georgetown University. NCCC has many [resources on cultural and linguistic competence](#) that can be used for training volunteers. See also [Community of Practice Racial Equity Learning Community: Resources for Advancing Racial Equity](#).

Background Checks and Screening Employees and Volunteers

- Article from **Blue Avocado**: [Criminal Records Checks for Prospective Staff and Volunteers](#) (2009).
- **Bridgespan's Nonprofit Hiring Toolkit: The Reference Check – More Than a Formality** (2016).

Volunteer Handbooks

- **Catholic Charities Volunteer Handbook.** View the [sample volunteer handbook](#) that addresses a range of program needs.
- **Policies and Procedures for Volunteers.** View sample policies and procedures in [this guide](#) from the Florida Department of Elder Affairs.

Volunteer Training

- **NASHP/ARCH/RCAW Respite Provider Recruitment and Training Initiative.** ARCH partnered with the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) and the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin (RCAW) to field test a competency-based online training curriculum for entry level respite providers and volunteers. It is available at no charge to the general public in select states. Additional states are invited to participate in offering the training. [Read more](#) about the initiative and [review the training](#).
- **AARP Connecting Caregivers to Community (CC2C) Volunteer Handbook.** AARP's CC2C program helps communities of faith address the needs of caregivers. The [CC2C Volunteer Handbook](#) has training resources including information on individual and group volunteer roles, code of conduct, and practice

scenarios. For a CC2C program overview and access to other resources, visit the [Website](#).

- **Caregiver Support Network Volunteer Training Manual.** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) and the Office of Care Management (OCM) have joined to form the Caregiver Support Network to prepare volunteers to assist veterans' primary caregivers more effectively. This training manual is designed to help community organizations and volunteers provide compassionate support to those offering care to America's veterans in their homes. Visit the [Website](#).

- **REST (Respite Education and Support Tools).** REST is a train-the-trainer course that prepares individuals to conduct respite training, equipping volunteer and paid REST Companions™ to provide respite to support caregivers who are caring for people with disabilities and health care needs across the lifespan. REST is a program of Marklund. Visit the [Website](#).
- **VolunteerHub.** Volunteer Hub provides helpful training strategies in their blog article [7 Elements to a Successful Volunteer Training Program](#). Included are recommendations for how volunteer training aligns with your recruitment, orientation, and retention efforts.

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