Family Respite Services Windsor Essex

A community where families are STRONG and ALL children belong.
Family Respite Services has a long history of collaborative work with agencies in our community.

FRS works in partnership with families who have children with disabilities. We coordinate support and provide short breaks that strengthen families and contribute to children having meaningful lives in the community.

Our vision is to have a community where families are strong, and all children belong.

Our mandate is to support children from infancy to age 18 who have developmental disabilities or mental health challenges.
FRS currently supports approximately 1300 children and their families in Windsor and Essex County. Most of the children that we support have developmental challenges. We also have some resources for children with mental health challenges that we provide in collaboration with children’s mental health agencies.

Our role is to assist families in developing a respite plan to give them a short break and caregiver support.

Families use resources from different programs/funding streams when they want to have a Direct Support Provider or in-home worker provide care of their child and provide a break from caregiving.

We also coordinate helping families apply for government funding for respite support.
Support for Families and Children

- FRS has a team of Family Coordinators who work with families to develop a range of support.
- In addition to our respite programs, which we will describe, we also offer a caregiver support group called Powerful Tools for Caregivers. [https://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org/](https://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org/)
- We have two staff who have been trained in this model and offer an online support group for 6 sessions, twice yearly.
- We have staff who provide a group for siblings (Sibshop) on a periodic basis.
- We also have staff trained to assist with parenting support (Triple P) along with other agencies in our community.
Parent Engagement

- We look for ways to connect families with lived experiences with each other and to give us input about our program.
- We have a family engagement group that has helped review policies and tools we use. This group also helps us create some informal opportunities like mom’s night out and dad’s night out.
- The group has organized informal coffee times and walks at a local park and is looking forward to a paint night.
- We also work closely with a local family network to provide ways for families to learn about circles of support, entering school, planning for success as an older teen, and building valued relationships in the community.
Direct Respite Funding

• Family Respite Services has a limited amount of funding that can be allocated to provide direct respite support for families. We allocate over $670,000 to families for direct respite plans. We also provide direct support through our out-of-home respite options.

• The types of respite funding that FRS allocates are in-home/community-based respite, out-of-home respite, autism respite, and mental health respite.

• Most of the funding and respite supports are for children who have a diagnosed developmental disability.

• We also assist families to develop respite plans using funds that they receive directly from the Provincial government.

• Approximately half of the 1300 families we support receive direct respite funding through FRS. The amount of funding depends on the situation and may only be a small amount per year (e.g. $500) or in some complex situations be up to about $4000 per year or more. Others use funds that they receive from various government funding programs, such as ACSD, Enhanced Respite, Special Services at Home, etc.
Funding allocations

• In Ontario, families who have children with disabilities can apply for funding directly from the government to assist with respite and support. This fund does not cover the cost of therapy.

• These funds can be managed directly by the family, or they can ask an agency such as FRS to help them.

• Family Respite Services also has funding that it can directly allocate to families to use for respite purposes.

• Families who have children with autism can apply for funding to assist with the cost of treatment. There is currently a long waiting list for these funds.
Special Services at Home

• The Special Services at Home program helps families who are caring for a child with a developmental and/or physical disability. The program is funded and managed by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services/Government of Ontario.

• The program helps families pay for certain kinds of services in or outside the family home.

• Families in our community can choose to administer any funds that they receive through SSAH themselves or ask FRS to administer them.

• If a family administers the funds themselves, they independently engage Direct Support Providers and invoice the Ministry directly. Our agency can assist them in recruiting a Direct Support Provider if they wish.

• If FRS administers the funding, we hire part-time/contract Direct Support Providers in consultation with the family to provide this support. We also reimburse any other use of their funds in their contract.
Mental Health Respite

• FRS provides respite for children with mental health challenges in collaboration with the children’s mental health agencies in our community.

• This support is meant to support children who are actively receiving support/treatment at one of the children’s mental health agencies. The family may be receiving counseling, day treatment, or other kinds of treatment at those agencies.

• The professional who is overseeing the treatment plan determines the role that respite support will play and provides any guidance regarding specific support for the child and any safety issues. It is not meant to be part of a discharge plan.

• The support is intended to be short-term, whereas it is usually longer-term for children with developmental challenges.

• FRS hires direct support providers who provide respite support, incorporating the goals of the children’s mental health treatment plan (e.g. emotional regulation, communication skills, social skill development). This provides a break for the parent and builds skills for the child. This team of workers has training in a trauma-based approach, emotional regulation, and non-violent crisis intervention.
Assisting People to Recruit Direct Support Providers

Families who have funding may need help to recruit someone to care for their child. The person that provides the service usually works independently (they are not FRS employees). They are often students or people who may work at the school board or other agencies and provide support on a part time basis.

We host a recruitment and matching tool called Supportyourway.ca. We actively recruit skilled people who are interested in providing respite care to register on this site. This allows families who have funding to access support to recruit someone. The tool is also known as respiteservices.com.

Families might have funding from a variety of sources that will allow them to have direct support.
Getting Linked with a Direct Support Provider

- To use the supportyourway/respiteservices.com tool, people wishing to support someone apply and are screened through us to ensure that they have a police clearance, individual interview, and an orientation about what is needed. They then create a posting on the site indicating their skills and availability.
- Families register on the site through us and create a posting indicating what support, skills, and availability they are looking for.
- We facilitate the match between the families and DSP. On the site none of their identifying information is public, so we provide this at the time when they would be planning to meet to see if it is a good fit. As mentioned previously, unless the Direct Support Provider is providing support through FRS administered Special Services at Home, they are working independently and are not an employee of FRS. Families are responsible to schedule and pay the person. If they have funding through FRS they would be reimbursed for this expense.
Community Integration/Out-of-Home Respite

Family Respite Services partners with 5 municipalities to provide staff through our agency to assist children with disabilities to participate in summer day camps and other recreation programs.

We are involved in the summer at 7 municipal recreation centers to provide this support. We are involved throughout the year in three municipal recreation programs that help young people and teens participate in recreation programs with their peers which we regard as out-of-home respite. This past summer about 100 children benefited from this support.
During the school year we are involved with three recreation centre groups. One offers opportunities for teens on Friday evenings and the other two offer Super Saturdays recreation programs for school aged children.

These are integrated programs. The parent pays the regular registration fee for the recreation program, and we work with the centre to assist in providing the program support.

The availability for this support, is dependent on funds available and the capacity of the recreation program.
Licensed Respite Homes

- Family Respite Services operates two licensed respite homes for children to access out-of-home respite. These are for children who live in Windsor. Community Living Essex County operates out-of-home respite for children who live in the county.

- We built a new respite home through a fundraising capital campaign for this purpose. We were successful in raising almost 2 million dollars for this purpose. It is designed to be used very flexibly. We use the home on weekends for overnight respite, with children coming from Friday to Sunday.

- During the week it is used after school for specialized support for children with more complex needs, including a program for urgent support for children with autism.
Solcz Family Foundation Respite Home
Solcz Family Foundation Respite Home
Licensed Respite Homes

• The other home is known as our Spago home since it is located on Spago Crescent. This is a home operated in partnership with the child welfare organization. Up to three children who are in long-term care with the Children’s Aid Society live at the home. Two additional children come for periodic respite each weekend. This home is more geared to supporting children with developmental and physical disabilities, but currently, two of the children residing in the home have autism.

• At both homes, typically children come for weekend respite about every 5-6 weeks.

• Children using these programs must have a developmental disability and be between the ages of 8-18.
“The Spago Home”
Purchased Respite Support

• FRS has a small team of staff who are providing more specialized respite supports for children with higher needs.

• Our current capacity is about 10-12 children.

• The services are funded through Complex Special Needs which is for children in the community with very high needs, Special Services at Home, Jordan’s Principle (funds for indigenous children) and Urgent Response Services for children with autism.

• We use our respite home for some of these after-school supports. Support may also take place within the community.

• The goal with these supports is to develop support plans and transition the respite support to community/home-based respite.
Service Provided in the Last Year

• In 2022-23 Family Respite Services provided 49,475 hours of respite support to children and their families in their homes and in the community.
• An additional 6456 hours of support were provided to help children participate in community recreation programs.
• 48 children used our Solcz Family Foundation Respite home for overnight or day visits.
• 10 children used our Spago home for overnight visits.
• 8367 hours of support were provided by FRS staff in family homes with Special Services at Home funding with 85 Direct Support Providers. FRS manages 423 contracts with families for this service.
Family Respite Services provides a considerable amount of service coordination for the families that we support. Many of the families have close working relationships with the Family Coordinators because we work alongside them for many years. Coordinators are often asked to assist families to problem solve issues about school, housing, and accessing other kinds of programs and supports.

Each Family Coordinator currently supports approximately 110-120 families.

There is a formal process for Coordinated Service Planning in Windsor-Essex. This process is for children who have complex needs. This is managed by our local hospital/mental health division, with involvement of community agencies such as FRS. The goal of Coordinated Service Planning is to come together to develop one plan that outlines all the service partners’ roles in assisting a family to achieve their goal.
Transition Planning with Families

- Family Respite Services assists families to think about the future and help with transition planning.
- We invite parents to attend group sessions to look at how to plan for developing a full life in community with their family member and to provide information about practical steps they may take to get there.
- We also provide information through a dedicated website and through our participation in several community initiatives to provide information, encourage the development of support networks/circles, and link with other families. (https://planyourtransition.com)
- We assist families with the process of determining eligibility for adult services through Developmental Services Ontario. This is the mechanism used to approve any funding or services for adults (18+) who have developmental disabilities. We are often involved with families as they meet with DSO at age 17 ½ to apply for adult support and provide them with assistance to apply for other Provincial disability funding.
Respitality

• One of the new supports that we have developed over the past year is a “respitality program”.

• \textit{Respite} + \textit{Hospitality} = \textit{RESPITALITY}

• Respitality is another way for family caregivers to have a short break or period of respite while at the same time, helping to rebuild the hospitality sector across Windsor and Essex County. It is a way for creative partnerships to develop to support families.
Benefits of Respite Care

Benefits to Caregivers

- Focuses on the benefits of self-care.
- Addresses barriers to receiving a needed break from caregiving.
- Encourages self-care as part of a healthy regimen to build resiliency.
- Able to share the experience with a guest of their choice.
- Connections in the community are developed.
- Feeling of support from others in the community
FRS has partnered with the hospitality industry. Through donations and sponsors we have been able to provide families with:

• Access to hotel stays
• An opportunity for self-care at a spa or salon
• A dinner at a restaurant
• A stay at a Bed-and-Breakfast
• Coupons for local community-based family activities
• We are also developing activity kits for children for families
• We allocate about 5-6 of these opportunities each month to families who request them from our program.
Many of the families that we support have many things happening and are overwhelmed. The system is very confusing. This is particularly so for newcomer families. We are happy to develop a greater understanding in our community about the services available so that we can assist them in overcoming barriers. We use translators to help us work with the families and are embarking on a project for which we received a grant to discover more about how we can engage newcomer families, help them meet each other, and support them in creative ways.
Challenges

There are insufficient financial resources to provide respite for every family who needs it. In particular, there are so many families coping with a new diagnosis of autism for their child. These families often are overwhelmed as they wait for funding for autism-related therapies.

Our agency fundraises in very creative ways to add to the ways we can help families but there still is greater demand than resources.
Working in partnership to support families in our community

FAMILY RESPITE SERVICES
WINDSOR-ESSEX