

Lifespan Respite Care Program



Lifespan Respite Grantee Lead Agency: **Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS)**

Funding Period: September 1, 2020 – August 31, 2023

Contact: Roxanne Diawara at roxanne.diawara@adss.alabama.gov

Primary Goal: **Enhance and expand existing respite and support services to family caregivers of children and adults, while developing a policy framework that will expand and strengthen Alabama’s current lifespan respite care initiatives.**

Key Performance Measures	Notable Achievements
<p>During the grant cycle, more than 2,700 unduplicated families received more than 140,000 respite hours, including training, universal respite, and emergency respite. Caregivers provided feedback via online surveys about why respite was important to them. Survey results showed that families served were very pleased with workshops across the state. Data collected from voucher recipients showed that using respite services improved caregivers’ mental, physical, and spiritual health, and allowed them to relieve some stress and focus on their own well-being. To measure project impact, staff collected quantitative and qualitative data including: a formal internal evaluation; surveys of caregivers; and numerical performance and outcome measures. This information supports legislative efforts to increase funding; increase new and enhance existing support services; and advance Alabama’s coordinated system of respite options.</p>	<p>During the 2022 Legislative Session, Alabama Lifespan Respite (ALR) advocated for and received a \$140,000 increase to the annual Education Trust Fund (ETF) state appropriation via the Alabama Department of Rehabilitative Services as a match for potential increased, new, or rollover federal funding opportunities. Increased funds, as well as increased legislative awareness and bipartisan support, helped the grantee reach all project goals and objectives to support caregivers statewide. In addition, during the final year of the project, funding was made available to partner with Alabama Lifespan Respite (ALR) as the first non-state agency to be included in the ADSS/ADRC/AAA PeerPlace referral portal as a pilot project. Technical assistance was offered through ALR, Coalition, and the Caregiver Wellness Initiative (CWI), and 10 mini-grants were awarded for startup or expansion of community respite programs.</p>

Key Objectives, Activities and Outcomes	Coalition, ADRC and Community Partners
<p>Objective 1. Reach underserved populations, including caregivers in rural areas, to increase new and existing support services.</p> <p>Notable Products and Performance Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALR launched the new Caregiver Wellness Initiative (CWI) to increase emergency respite funds and make available mental health counseling stipends to caregivers enrolled in any ALR reimbursement program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff contracted with five licensed mental health providers across the state to provide crisis counseling, often using various telehealth platforms. ▪ Staff acquired and delivered Wi-Fi-enabled tablets that helped facilitate counseling via tele practice. 	<p>State and Community Partners</p> <p>Alabama Lifespan Respite (ALR) staff consistently engage in providing technical assistance to advance the Caregiver Wellness Initiative (CWI) as a means of promoting respite options and collaborating with other programs to improve the quality and availability of support services and respite.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One collaboration included technical assistance with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation and focused on lessons

- To begin, 31 caregivers from 18 counties applied for counseling stipends, and 275 caregivers from 39 counties received caregiver wellness counseling stipends during the funding period.
- An additional private grant fund through Venturi Brighter Day was awarded, further increasing this new caregiver support service initiative.

Objective 2: Increase collaborations with state and local agencies and public-private partnerships to increase respite and respite education.

Notable Expansion Activities and Performance Outcomes

- Upon review, Alabama’s well-established “No Wrong Door” (NWD) referral process for family caregiver services and supports was found to be difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, ADSS reevaluated current practices with the goal of removing difficult steps in and simplifying the referral process for family caregivers who call in during a crisis.
 - In their proactive effort, ADSS collaborated with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and suggested that ALR be allowed access to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) PeerPlace system and retrieve referrals in a way that would provide high performance and maintain person-centered principles.
 - In May, 2023, ADSS worked with the West Alabama Regional Planning Commission (WARC) to initiate all ADRC referrals for the ALR program directly through the PeerPlace data management system, offering a single-point-of-entry system designed to link call center information and assistance specialists with long-term services and supports (LTSS) resources.
 - The PeerPlace interface allowed I&R specialists to track, enter data, refer, and manage multiple information requests at one time while seamlessly communicating with family caregivers.
 - Twelve of thirteen AAA PeerPlace users sent referrals directly to ALR — their first time connecting with organizations outside of the network to the PeerPlace Platform.

Objective 3: Advance coordinated systems of respite options to improve the delivery, quality, and availability of respite services for all caregivers.

Notable Partnerships and Performance Activities

- Recognizing significant service gaps for caregivers of family members with mental illness or intellectual disabilities, Alzheimer’s, or other cognitive disorders, autism spectrum disorders, returning wounded soldiers, and those with stroke or brain injury, Coalition members worked to increase the involvement of small non-profit and faith-based organizations in serving these frequently overlooked populations.
 - ALR staff participated in and presented successful respite models for replication. One presentation, “Achieving Respite Through Mental Health Supports,” highlighted ALR’s Caregiver Wellness Initiative (CWI) and provided information for replication of caregiver mental health counseling, supports in other respite programs, and the provision of stipends to help sustain caregivers’ health as they fulfilled their role in caring for loved ones.

learned and best practices for its caregiver mental health program.

- Senior and Family Matters, Inc. of Trussville, Alabama sought assistance from ALR regarding a new emergency respite program for senior caregivers.
- The CORE Project, Inc. received an ALR mini-grant to provide a summer respite program for individuals living with severe autism. Seventy-nine family caregivers of twenty-four individuals from eight to 25 years-of-age received summer respite.

State Respite Coalition/ Organization Role

Alabama Lifespan Respite (ALR) is based on strong, long-lasting partnerships with public, private, and coalition sectors. The Alabama Respite Coalition members are key partners in working toward increased respite, respite education, and continued sustainability. To ensure that the needs and perspectives of all family members across the lifespan are addressed, their combined experience and knowledge are used. Members of the coalition met every three months to coordinate efforts toward achieving goals and objectives, to talk about strategies, and to identify issues and potential solutions. During meetings, the ALR voucher system and any barriers were carefully examined to guide decisions about future policies and practices.

Aging and Disability Resource Center Role

In addition to the partnership and activities described under Objective 2, the ALR further strengthened collaborations with the local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) partnerships by receiving robotic pets and distributing them to aging caregivers served by ALR statewide.

Program Flexibilities and Supports Offered in Response to Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

- ALR supported caregivers during the holiday season by creating and sharing the “Holiday Health & Safety Items Assistance” as well as the “12 Days of Care Giving” campaign.
- ALR awarded assistance to 100 caregivers enrolled in the Universal Respite Reimbursement program, allowing caregivers to purchase specific items such as hand sanitizer, masks, and cleaning products.
- To address caregivers at financial risk and to reduce caregiver stress and anxiety brought on by the pandemic, ALR provided gift cards for purchasing groceries, prepared meals, health, and hygiene items to safely provide care, gas, etc.



For more information, contact ARCH at (703) 256-2084