

## TOPIC:

# A Byte of Respite: Rules Around Arranging for Respite Care

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### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CREDIT:

*\*Read through this self-study*

*\*Fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire*

*\*Return to ACRF for 1.0 hour of training credit.*



All resource families need to take breaks or will need support in supervising the youth in their homes at some point. Respite is a great way to meet this need. For the purpose of this **Tiny Training Byte**, we're going to address just a few specifics with respite. We encourage you to talk with your licensing worker and the child's caseworker for more information or questions you may have when considering respite.

## What is formal respite?

Respite is different from a child going to spend the night at a friend's house or having a babysitter over so you can have an evening out. Respite implies that the caregiver or the child needs a short-term break for a variety of reasons. This can be for just one night or longer depending on the reason for the break. Respite is also used when a child cannot join a family for trips.

## How can a Foster Parents find a Respite Provider?

Below are some suggestions about how to identify appropriate substitute caregivers for the children and youth you care for.

- You can rely on your natural support network (family, friends, and neighbors, people you trust and know well). Respite providers are not required to be licensed.
- You can ask the child's caseworker if there are any previous foster families the child is still connected to who may be open to providing occasional respite.
- You can reach out to your licensing worker to connect you with other licensed foster homes who may be available.
- You can post a request for help on one of the Facebook pages. In Alaska, the three largest online communities that connect foster and adoptive families are the Alaska Adoptive and Foster Parents Facebook group, the Interior Alaska Foster Care Families group, and the Southeast Alaska Foster Care Families group. Remember to do your due diligence when choosing caregivers even if they are other foster or adoptive parents. It is your responsibility to choose safe and appropriate caregivers.
- Also, remember your licensing capacity. If you are a licensed foster parent, you must remain within your capacity if you are going to provide respite for another foster parent.

### Finding Respite Through Online Facebook Groups

Privacy and confidentiality of youth and their families is required even in closed groups.

Foster parents cannot share confidential information with other foster parents just because they are foster parents. Info can only be shared on a need to know basis to provide care to the child.

Always check with the youth's caseworker and your licensing worker to verify the person you connected with is in good standing with OCS.

## What are the costs associated with respite care?

The OCS computer system does not have a “respite” button to pay for respite. This means that payment for respite services is an informal agreement between both parties. Generally, the understanding is that the foster parent will pay the respite provider with the daily rate for the nights the child stays at the respite provider’s home.

For example:

*Your 6-year-old is going to respite for 3 nights. The daily rate in Anchorage is \$29.86.*

$$\$29.86 \times 3 = \$89.58$$

## When do you pay the respite provider?

Because this is an informal system, there are going to be varying ways payment can be addressed. Each of these can be discussed based on the needs of the child and the needs and availability for the primary foster parent and respite provider. Here are some suggestions:

- Payment in advance (the date the child is dropped off)
- Payment at the end of respite (the date the child is picked up)
- Payment when the primary placement receives reimbursement. This means the primary placement would provide the respite provider the payment when they receive the reimbursement from OCS.

Can you trade respite services instead of paying someone? Yes! If you make a trade with another respite provider so you can each get a break, and you both agree, trading is appropriate.

If your respite provider is a close friend or a family member, you can work out an arrangement for payment that meets everyone’s needs. Some resource parents have support networks who may not charge them for the break.

## How long can respite be?

Respite can be utilized for up to 21 days. Remember though, any time a child will be in the care of an alternative caregiver for more than 72 hours (3 days), a foster parent must notify and get approval from the child’s caseworker. For respite less than 72 hours, best practice however, would be to notify the caseworker anytime the child is not going to be in your care for longer than one day.



## What Your Respite Provider Needs From You

*Make sure your respite provider has what they need to provide care to your child. Put it in writing. R Choose a provider who will provide care consistent with foster care regulations.*

- Your Contact Information
- Emergency Information and Medical Contacts, Caseworker Information
- Medication and Instructions for Medication
- Information about special needs of child as needed to provide care
- Naps/Bedtime/Sleeping
- Eating Information, Food Allergies
- Toileting and Diapering Information if appropriate
- How to handle behavior problems (and a reminder about no physical or humiliating punishment)
- Appropriate amounts and types of clothing and supplies

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