

FAMILY TIPSHEET: RESPIRE



Email: Resourcecentre@hollandbloorview.ca

What is Respite Care?

Respite care offers families a planned short break from the demands of caregiving, helping parents/guardians recharge and fostering opportunities for all family members to participate actively in the community.

During respite, a support worker might:

- Accompany your family member to community outings (e.g., parks, restaurants, or museums)
- Teach skills like preparing snacks or engaging in hobbies
- Participate in recreational activities (e.g., sports, board games, or arts programs)

Why is respite important?

- It provides children with disabilities enriching enjoyable experiences.
- Families can re-energize to sustain healthy relationships.
- Respite may include one-on-one care with a support worker or structured programs, such as camps or overnight stays.

Finding the Right Support Worker

Qualities to Look for in a Support Worker:

Consider someone who is:

- Patient, kind, and responsible
- Creative, fun, and a good communicator
- Skilled in teaching or caregiving

Key Questions to Reflect On:

- What activities will the worker support?
- When and how often will you need assistance?
- Are there specific skills or traits you require, such as experience in sports, arts, technology, first aid/CPR, driver's license, etc.?

Where to Look:

- 1) Contact www.respiteservices.com about their respite worker list
- 2) Go to www.hollandbloorview.ca/respice for more information about Holland Bloorview's respite program
- 3) Ask resourcecentre@hollandbloorview.ca for the 'Community Respite Opportunities' tipsheet
- 4) Talk to other families about where they find their support workers
- 5) Make a flyer or electronic posting for local high schools, colleges and universities (on their websites or in person)
- 6) Ask someone who already knows and gets along with your family member

Interviewing and Hiring a Support Worker

Step 1: Telephone Screening:

- Speak with multiple applicants to compare.
- Ask about their availability, experience, and reasons for interest in the job.
- Listen for flexibility, enthusiasm, and sincerity.

Step 2: In-Person Interview:

- First meeting: Conduct a casual interview in a public place to assess their personality and communication skills.
- Second meeting: Invite them to your home or another relevant setting to observe how they interact with your family member.

Sample Questions to Ask:

1. What interests you about this role?
2. What experience do you have with children or individuals with disabilities?
3. Are you available on [specific days/times]?
4. Can you provide references and a resume?
5. Do you have a valid driver's license or CPR/First Aid certification?

Decision-Making:

- Consider their compatibility with your family member.
- Assess their skills, dependability, and willingness to learn.
- Trust your instincts and have a back-up option.

Training and Supporting a Respite Worker

Every child or teen has unique ways of communicating, learning, and engaging with the world. While a support worker may not immediately know the best approach, you can guide them in the right direction.

Orientation for the Worker:

- Create an “All About Me” profile for your family member with key details like likes, dislikes, routines, and health needs.
- Walk them through daily schedules and introduce relevant community resources.
- Use coaching and open dialogue to clarify expectations and address questions.

Tips for Communication:

- Set clear communication methods (e.g., in-person, email, or phone).
- Provide feedback regularly to ensure mutual understanding and growth.

Building a Strong Relationship:

- Celebrate successes: Highlight moments where the worker helped your family member learn or achieve something new.
- Offer periodic reviews: Discuss areas for improvement, additional training, or activity ideas.
- Show appreciation: Acknowledge their contributions and skills.

Empowering families with the right tools and support is key to creating positive and enriching respite experiences!