

Respite care is a support to resource families, in which another approved provider cares for the child for a temporary, short-term period of time. Respite care is used for these purposes:

- to ensure that siblings who are placed separately have time together,
- to maintain children's connections with their extended birth family or ties to their home community,
- to give resource parents and children a "break" from each other when necessary to preserve the relationship/placement,
- to provide foster youth in group care with family experiences, and
- to explore the parent/child fit in a potential placement change (for example, with a pre-adoptive family)

Resource families can request respite through the agency social worker. Please note that respite care funded through the foster care system must be with an agency-approved provider/family. Social events and outings that are a part of the child's normal developmental experience –for example, a sleepover at a friend's house or a church day-trip –are not considered to be formal respite care. Families should check with the child's worker to see if there are any local requirements

The **purpose of respite care** for families, including **foster families**, **is to** reduce foster home disruption and **provide a stable foster care placement for the child. It can be provided on** an emergency or **planned basis.**

You should begin to make plans for respite before your first placement. One option - identify another Resource Family to use for respite – a family you can get along with, who has much in common

with your family, who is ready to accept the same types of placement you will accept (age, gender, special needs, etc.) who lives in a near-by neighborhood and other factors that show the families are compatible. These families can then be formal respite for each other, and also help out informally for babysitting, etc.

Another option is to have a close friend or family member become qualified for respite. (this qualification is almost identical to the Resource Family approval, including classes; and you know that is not a rapid process)

With either option, this family can then be involved at various times during the placement, and on stand-by to perform respite duties. Then when respite occurs, the child experiences it more as a sleep-over with a family friend (a treat) instead of time in limbo with strangers.

In these cases, respite is easier to arrange, easier to prepare the child for, easier to return to the normal routine... it actually performs as intended, providing a therapeutic and restful time for the child and the placement family. Even “emergency” respite can be managed easily if these family-to-family relationships have already been developed.

The alternative is to wait until the desired respite date is only a couple of weeks away, then scramble to find a placement from the list of available Resource Family homes. This type of respite is usually less successful – more stress in scheduling, more stress in preparing the child, more stress in returning to normal routine. Approaching respite in this way can result in more upset to the family and child than it resolves.

If you do not already have at least one respite family in your support network, please start now to identify one. Then respite can be the beneficial experience it should be for your family.