

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE April 1, 2008

CIRCULAR LETTER # SSA 08 - 21

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors of Social Services
Local Department of Social Services

FROM: Cathy F. Mols, Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: This Circular Letter replaces and supercedes Circular Letter SSA # 06-3 (Respite Care for Kinship Care Providers and Resource Families) and also supercedes Circular Letter SSA # 08 – 15, dated March 1, 2008. Please destroy all SSA # 08 – 15 Circular Letters, dated March 1, 2008.

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services) and Resource Units

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Resource Development Placement and Support Services

ACTION REQUIRED OF: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services), Kinship Care Services and Resource Units

REQUIRED ACTION: The Local Department of Social Services will implement procedures when responding to requests for Respite Care

ACTION DUE DATE: April 1, 2008

CONTACT PERSON: Kevin Keegan, Director
Resource Development Placement and Support Services
410 767-7910

Purpose

This Circular Letter provides guidelines for the re-introduction of respite care services to children in public foster homes and kinship care placements. The previous policy regarding respite care went into effect September 1, 2005. This service is specifically for caregivers of children in Out-of-Home placement, who receive regular, intermediate or public treatment board rates and for formal kinship caregivers of children committed to the State of Maryland. There are separate respite care rates for private treatment foster care homes, which are not included in this policy.

This Circular Letter will not only reintroduce respite care services, but will also include amendments and additions to the previous policy.

Background

Within the twenty-four (24) Local Departments of Social Services, foster care and kinship care families provide care to children 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Respite care is a major supportive service needed when caring for children in Out-of-Home placement. There has been an upward trend of families caring for children with more complex behavioral and/or medical issues. It has been recognized in the literature and practice that respite care is a cost effective way to preserve placements, while protecting children at risk of multiple placements and more restrictive placements.

The Maryland Department of Human Resources has offered on-going respite care services to foster families receiving regular or intermediate Out-of-Home placement services and formal kinship caregivers. Although respite care plays a major role in the retention of foster care and kinship care families, respite care services in Maryland have been underutilized.

DEFINITION

Respite care is a short-term service consisting of daily or overnight care to a child(ren) in Out-of-Home placement, who reside in a public foster home or kinship care placement. The respite care provider is a qualified caregiver approved or informal and screened in by the local department of social services to provide respite care services to foster or kinship families. The purpose of respite care services is to provide down time to foster children and foster/kinship families; prevent disruption in placements and to retain current foster/kinship families. The respite care provider contributes to keeping the child safe while the child remains in the community and in a least restrictive, family-like setting.

A “Respite Care Day” is defined as a minimum of 8 hours to an overnight stay.

Home Specific Respite Care Option – All respite care services must be completed in the approved foster/kinship care home where the foster /kinship child resides.

Reconsideration year – the date when the foster/kinship family was initially approved and the subsequent dates of reconsideration that follow, on a year-to-year basis.

RESPITE CARE SERVICES**SERVICE
OFFERRED**

Respite care services are planned or available during an unplanned crisis situation. These services are meant to give the family the opportunity to take a break from their caregiving responsibilities for a short period of time.

Foster care and kinship care families may request respite services during their reconsideration year. Respite care services are limited to seven (7) days per reconsideration year and cannot be carried over to the next reconsideration year. Families have the option to use their respite care services in single days or in a block of days. The caregiver should give fourteen (14) days advance notice of the request for this planned service. Once the local department is notified, all caseworkers with children in the caregiver’s home must be notified of this short-term placement change.

Additional respite care days may be granted on a case-by-case basis to prevent disruption of the placement. The local department of social services will make the determination based on

considerations such as the following:

- The child has a history of multiple placements;
- The child's placement is at risk of being disrupted; and/or,
- There is documentation from a therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist or physician of the need for additional respite care services.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

The following individuals are eligible to receive respite care services:

- Foster families approved by and caring for a child in the care of the a local departments of Social Services; and/or,
- Kinship care providers caring for a child committed to the state of Maryland and receiving kinship care services through a local department of social services.

There is no income requirement. These are public foster families receiving regular, intermediate, or treatment board rates and approved kinship care providers caring for state committed children. This does not apply to private purchase of care families or private treatment foster care families.

HOW TO APPLY

The caregiver must initiate the request for respite care. The caregiver, with the assistance of the respite care provider shall complete a Foster Care and Kinship Care Respite Services Request Form and return it to the child's caseworker to be processed. The child's caseworker will maintain copies in the child's record and forward the original to the home worker. The current caregiver will also receive a copy for their records. The completed form shall include:

- Date of request
- Names of current caregiver and respite care provider
- Address and zip code of caregiver and respite care provider
- Landline telephone number of current caregiver and respite care provider
- The name of the children for whom the service is requested
- School or day program currently used by the child(ren)
- Medical and/or psychological information (i.e. doctor's name and telephone number)
- Medications
- Home Specific Respite Care Option
- Signatures of current caregiver and respite care provider

- # Of days requested and the # of days used
- Approval status
- Signatures are required by the child's caseworker, the supervisor of the child's caseworker, the home worker and the home worker's supervisor.

Planned respite care requests are to be submitted within fourteen (14) days of use. Crisis/emergency respite care requests are to be handled by the local department on an as needed, case-by-case basis.

**RESPITE CARE
RATES &
CHARGE CODE**

Respite care rates are \$30.00 per day per child. Respite care services can also be provided on a voluntary basis.

Payments for respite care services are to be accessed through the CHESSIE service log. Foster care respite services are to be charged to code 7157 and the charge code for kinship care respite services is 7158.

**WHO CAN BE
USED AS
RESPITE
PROVIDERS**

A respite care provider may be:

- An approved foster parent
- An approved respite foster parent
- An approved emergency foster parent
- An approved restricted foster parent
- An approved kinship care provider
- An approved day care provider (Maryland State Department of Education – Office of Child Care)
- Prospective foster parents who have completed pride training, criminal background/child protective services clearances and all assessments but have failed to pass their home inspection. This type of informal respite care provider is required to provide respite care using the Home Specific Respite Care Option.
- A family member or family friend who has undergone an assessment by a local department of social services and has been found to meet the standards for back-up status.
- A family member or friend who is not approved in any of the categories listed above can provide informal respite care under the Home Specific Respite Option or in their own home, if the criteria for informal respite care are met.

**CRITERIA FOR
RESPITE CARE
SERVICES**

- Satisfactory Home Health Inspection, completed by the local department of social services,
- Foster child must have his/her own bed. Bunk beds are

prohibited

- Operable landline telephone

If the Home Specific Respite Care Option is not utilized, the following requirements need to be met before being approved as a respite placement:

- Respite provider must:
 - be 21 years old or older
 - have the physical and mental health to care for the child(ren)
 - meet safety and health standards by receiving a satisfactory Home Health inspection, completed by a local department of social services
- Foster child must have his/her own bed. Bunk beds are prohibited
- Respite home must have an operable landline telephone
- Criminal Background Check for respite provider and all members of the household 18 years and older
- Child Protective Services Clearance for respite provider and all members of the household 18 years and older

RESPONSIBILITY OF LDSS

- Keep accurate and up-to-date log of active approved and informal respite care providers
- Keep record of respite requests and usage to be documented on contact notes in CHESSIE and included on the revised Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention Monthly Report
- Recruit for community approved and informal respite families who will provide respite care services with the board rate and/or on a voluntary basis
- Coordinate respite care services for local jurisdiction
- Access Respite Care Request form on the SSA net
- Maintain current profiles of each respite care provider
- Conduct yearly reconsideration screening of all respite care providers
- Locate respite care families by:
 1. Using the current pool of all categories of approved foster parents, kinship care providers and informal respite care providers
 2. Approving qualified applicants as exclusive respite care providers
 3. Recruiting families in communities who wish to provide formal or informal respite care on a voluntary or paid basis

4. Identify Emergency Foster Care Providers who are interested in providing respite care services also (Note: Emergency Foster Care Providers are not eligible to receive an additional retainer for providing respite care services.)
5. Identify prospective respite foster families who have completed pride training, criminal background and child protective services clearances and assessments but have failed to pass the home inspection.
6. Use local resources – to support respite (i.e. food and entertainment vouchers from local vendors)

**RESPONSIBILITY
OF DHR/SSA**

- Conduct statewide recruitment and retention of respite families who volunteer their services or are eligible to receive the board rate
- Provide assistance to local jurisdictions in the tracking and monitoring of funds
- Provide support, assistance and advocacy
- Maintain ongoing data collection to assess recruitment and retention outcomes of respite care providers
- In collaboration with the Maryland Foster Parent Association and the local departments of social services, strategize approaches to improve the utilization of respite care services.

Foster Care and Kinship Care Respite Services Request Form
(Instructions on reverse side)

SECTION I

Date of request: _____
 Name of current caregiver(s): _____
 Address & zip code: _____

 Telephone # _____ Emergency # _____
 Current Caregiver's Signature: _____

Child's Name	Date Of Birth	School/Day Program	Medical/Psychological Information (i.e. doctor's name, telephone #)	Medications

Name of Respite Care Provider: _____
 Address & Telephone # (landline required): _____
 Home Specific Respite Care Option _____
 Respite Provider's Signature: _____

SECTION II

Number of days requested: _____
 Dates requested: _____
 Number of days unused: _____
 Approved: _____ Not Approved: _____

Please return form to your local department of social services' caseworker

SECTION III

For Local Departments of Social Services use only

Signature of Child's Caseworker: _____ Date: _____
 Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Signature of Home Worker: _____ Date: _____

 Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS
Foster Care and Kinship Care Respite Services Request Form

SECTION I

- Current foster/kinship care provider must complete most items of the **Foster Care and Kinship Care Respite Services Request Form** in section I. (**Note:** Must include the home landline telephone # and signature of current foster/kinship care provider.)
- Respite Care provider must also participate in the completion of this section. Complete name, address with city/county, state and zip code. For the Home Specific Respite Care Option, indicate a simple yes or no. Respite care provider must sign the form where indicated.

SECTION II

- Section II must be completed by the child's caseworker.
- Complete all items and indicate the approval status.

SECTION III

- Signatures are required by the child's caseworker, the supervisor of the child's caseworker, the home worker and the home workers supervisor.
- Both the current foster/kinship care provider and the child's caseworker must receive copies of the completed Foster Care and Kinship Care Respite Services Request Form.
- The original copy of the form must be received by the home worker and retained in resource home record.

Note: Planned respite care requests are to be submitted with in 14 (fourteen) days of use. Emergency/crisis request will be handled on an as needed basis by the local departments.