

# Offering Respite to Caregivers



We are pleased to share profiles detailing three Exemplary kinship practices, all of which are effectively offering respite to caregivers:

- ▶ [Caregiver Relief Services – Parc Center for Disabilities \(Florida\)](#)
- ▶ [Grandfamily Respite Vouchers – Larimer County Office on Aging \(Colorado\)](#)
- ▶ [Summer Camp – Respite Services – Direction Home of Eastern Ohio](#)

These practices help caregivers by giving them the time and/or means to take a much-needed break from caregiving to care for themselves, whether that means resting, exercising, socializing, attending to their own healthcare needs, or checking off other items on their to-do list without kids in tow. We encourage readers to consider how they can replicate these practices in their communities, and to [reach out to us for assistance](#).

## Caregiver Relief Services – Parc Center for Disabilities (Florida)

### Practice Description

Parc Center for Disabilities' caregiver relief services began over 12 years ago and are dedicated to serving kin caregivers who are raising children with disabilities, whether foster care involved or not. This practice is exemplary because it provides kin caregivers with specialized in-home child care, so they can attend to their own needs and maintain their well-being. By alleviating caregiver stress, preventing burnout, and supporting family stability, caregiver relief services help improve the quality of life of both kin caregivers and the children in their care.

Parc Center provides 15 hours a month of respite care for up to three months for all kinship/grandfamilies whose caregiver is over the age of 55, regardless of whether the child has a disability. (They receive a specific grant from their local community foundation's senior citizen board in order to serve caregivers who do not have a child in their home with a disability.) After three months, families who have a child with a documented trauma or disability are transitioned to the long-term respite program, which provides continual support until the child turns 22. To qualify as having a

disability, the caregiver must provide paperwork from the child's school, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or a diagnosis from a doctor.

The long-term respite services pair each kin caregiver with a respite provider for 20 hours of monthly respite. The Center arranges a "meet and greet" session so the caregiver and provider can get to know each other, discuss expectations, and determine whether they are a good fit. If either the caregiver or the provider feels that the match is not ideal, the Center will assign another provider. Once there is a good match, the caregiver and provider collaborate to establish a flexible care schedule that works for the caregiver's family and home needs. The caregiver can decide on weekly, biweekly, or monthly respite care sessions. This personalized, caregiver-driven approach helps caregivers manage their responsibilities. While awaiting the best pairing, caregivers can receive respite by participating in once-a-month group care for children.

On average, the program serves 25 to 30 kinship families annually, with caregivers ranging in age from 30 to over 70. Many of the families served live below the federal poverty line, making access to free respite services critical for their ability to continue raising their kin children. Due to the high demand for respite care, there is generally a waitlist of 6 to 12 months for a respite care provider. Once a caregiver is enrolled in the program, they do not have to reapply; however, they are required to update documents on a yearly basis to verify current household information such as address, contact details, emergency contacts, and any changes in the child's needs or services. The update typically takes caregivers 5 to 10 minutes to complete, depending on how much information has changed.

## **Partnership and Collaboration**

Parc Center effectively collaborates with their respite providers, who are vetted, hired, and trained through the organization. Most of the providers work full-time elsewhere and are recruited either by word of mouth or community functions. They go through two rounds of interviews, as well as background checks and reference checks. Once hired, providers complete multiple trainings, on topics such as trauma-informed care and de-escalation. Every provider is nationally trained by the ARCH National Respite Network. While Parc Center allows the provider and family to determine their own schedule, they ask that the provider be available to provide respite at least one weekend day a month.

## **Evidence and Continuous Quality Improvement**

Parc Center measures the effectiveness of this practice in multiple ways. Approximately every six months, a staff member calls each family to ask how the respite care is going and determine if the family needs any additional support. Additionally, they send out an electronic survey every six months, with an average return rate of about 80%. Parc Center increases their survey response rate by notifying respite providers that a survey

was sent to families and asking the providers to follow up with the caregivers to encourage them to complete it. For caregivers who are not comfortable with technology, they offer alternative methods such as completing the survey by phone or in person on paper.

Staff utilize the survey responses to determine which components of the practice are working well, and which need to be changed. For open-ended questions, they perform a qualitative analysis to determine if there is a need for any changes.

### Tips for Replication

- ▶ **Create an effective process for matching families and respite providers.** Each family has different needs and priorities; taking the time to ensure a good respite provider match is vital to the continuity of the practice.
- ▶ **Recruit effectively.** Teacher aids from local schools and certified nurse assistants make up many of Parc Center’s providers due to their knowledge of child development, health, and trauma-informed care.

## Grandfamily Respite Vouchers – Larimer County Office on Aging (Colorado)

### Practice Description

The Larimer County Office on Aging (LCOA) practice of offering Grandfamily Respite Vouchers to relative caregivers is an exemplary example of respite voucher practices that others can replicate and offer in their communities so that caregivers can attend to their own needs. Under this flexible program, respite can take many forms, depending on the caregiver’s needs. The vouchers can be used to help pay for child care or an after-school program, tutoring, camps, sports fees, or other activities. Caregivers can also use the vouchers for house cleaning or for in-home child care provided by someone the caregiver or child is familiar with – such as a family member who does not live in the home, a friend, or a neighbor – or, if they prefer, a professional service provider.

Because of funding restrictions, to qualify for the voucher, a caregiver must be a resident of Larimer County who is a grandparent, other non-parental relative, or step-grandparent aged 55+ caring full-time for a child aged 17 years or younger. Voucher amounts have increased over the past four years and are now approximately \$600 per six-month period or \$1,200 per fiscal year. Since launching the practice in July 2022, LCOA has issued 97 Grandfamily Respite Vouchers to 25 relative caregivers.

This practice is part of a more comprehensive Family Caregiver Support Program, which is staffed by case managers and a Spanish-speaking staff person who helps serve the nearly 25% of their caregivers who are Hispanic/Latino. Once applicants are deemed eligible for the voucher, a case manager conducts a home visit. While in the home, the case manager reviews services that are available to the kin caregiver in addition to the respite voucher, which helps ensure other supports are put in place to help the family receive needed services. The case manager and kin caregiver brainstorm together on how to best use the voucher. The goal is to have the caregivers use the voucher, so establishing a plan and practical timeline to use the voucher sets them up for success.

The Grandfamily Respite Voucher Program is primarily funded through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, authorized under Title III-E of the Older Americans Act. In addition, Larimer County receives grant funding for the respite vouchers from the Colorado Respite Coalition, a program of Easterseals Colorado.

## **Partnership and Collaboration**

Partnerships with key local community agencies are needed to effectively implement and promote this practice. Prior to starting this practice, LCOA was already providing respite services to caregivers of older adults, but they understood that the respite needs of grandfamilies differed from the population they were serving. Before establishing the Grandfamily Respite Voucher, they leaned on community agencies already serving kin caregivers to understand their unique circumstances and needs.

LCOA also designed their voucher practice in consultation with relative caregivers' identified needs and preferences, and they continue to adapt their practice based on ongoing interactions consistent with person- and family-centered practice, as well as an annual survey (discussed below).

LCOA is actively engaged with the Larimer County Alliance for Grandfamilies, which is comprised of kin caregivers and community organizations that provide support to improve the health and well-being of kinship/grandfamilies. Previously, LCOA engaged with the Larimer County Department of Human Services-led *Supported Families, Stronger Community* initiative, which at the time supported child maltreatment prevention service coordination by providing navigation services to connect families to resources. Collaborations such as these have been helpful for outreach to promote the Grandfamily Respite Voucher opportunity to relative caregivers in the County.

## **Evidence and Continuous Quality Improvement**

A survey is sent out to all Grandfamily Respite Voucher recipients once a year. The survey asks how the relative caregiver used the respite voucher, what can be improved,

what services were not covered that would have been helpful to them, and how the respite opportunity affected them and/or their family. Ongoing communication with relative caregivers throughout the year provides opportunities to gather additional feedback. Survey results and anecdotal feedback are reviewed by the Family Caregiver Support staff and the Aging & Disability Resource Center supervisor to assess if any modifications need to be made to the practice. For example, based on caregiver feedback, LCOA added house-cleaning services to the list of qualified services. Success is also measured by the program's ability to meet all of the needs for vouchers and by caregiver utilization of the vouchers once they are awarded to the families.

## Tips for Replication

- ▶ **Establish efficient administrative processes to award vouchers.** Make it easy for caregivers to be reimbursed for voucher expenses and provide several options for caregivers to submit documentation for reimbursement, keeping in mind that some are not tech-savvy.
- ▶ **Develop a multi-faceted approach to promote the respite voucher program** to ensure full utilization of the voucher funding. Identify the best partners, such as those already serving kin caregivers, to help you get the word out. Tap into any marketing resources your organization has to help with outreach, or budget marketing expenses if that is feasible. LCOA has found that kin caregivers and partner organizations are the best promoters of the program. Consider outreach tactics such as placing flyers around the community, posting on social media, writing a feature for your website, attending resource fairs, presenting in the community, and sending email blasts. When designing your promotions, recognize that you will likely need multiple campaign ideas – a 55-year-old aunt will likely respond to a different approach than an 80-year-old great-grandmother.
- ▶ **To ensure that caregivers use their vouchers, help them decide how to use the voucher and encourage them to use it as soon as they can.** Also, follow up with caregivers who have not used the vouchers they received, so the benefit does not go unspent.
- ▶ **Allow relatives, friends, neighbors, and other individuals familiar with the family to provide child care.** This will ease anxiety for the caregiver and the child and build stronger family and community support for the caregiver.
- ▶ **If you do not have experience serving kin caregivers, meet with community partners that do before you initiate this practice.** They will help you understand the families' strengths, challenges, and needs, and the best approaches to reaching them.

- ▶ **Provide safety training prior to sending your staff out to conduct home visits.** LCOA program staff members met with Child Protective Services and received training prior to launching their respite voucher program.
- ▶ **When you first start offering the respite vouchers, understand that it takes time to build the practice and get the word out about the opportunity.** Do not be discouraged if you do not receive a high volume of applications at the beginning; stay focused on marketing and outreach.
- ▶ **Use a collaborative approach when implementing the practice.** Remember that respite is a relationship-based service, and you are not just giving kin caregivers a voucher. Take the time to build a relationship with the family, empower them to maximize this benefit, understand their broader needs, and link them to other services provided by your agency or your partner organizations.

## Additional Practice Resources

To learn more about this practice, review the [Larimer County Caregiver Flyer](#).

## Summer Camp – Respite Services – Direction Home of Eastern Ohio

### Practice Description

The summer camp offered by Direction Home of Eastern Ohio (DHEO) is designed to provide relative caregivers, aged 55+, with a welcome break from their caregiving role. It is exemplary because it is a creative and full-service form of respite for kin caregivers that also directly benefits the children. DHEO contracts with service providers to run the camp sites, and the length of the camp and programming provided vary by service provider. While the children are at camp, the kin caregivers have time for self-care, or to tend to responsibilities that are difficult to manage with a full house. One grandmother of four shared her excitement about simply having the time to “finally get all the laundry done.” Relative caregivers who are still in the workforce also appreciate this opportunity.

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), a part of the Older Americans Act (OAA), provides some of the funds that support the respite practice and guides how it is implemented. To qualify for support, the NFCSP requires a caregiver to be the primary, full-time, relative caregiver of a minor child who resides in the caregiver’s home because their parents are unable to care for them. To qualify for the respite opportunity, the relative caregiver participates in an assessment process that identifies the caregiver’s needs and guides the determination of eligibility. Once approved by DHEO, the kinship family submits a camp application to the service

provider. If accepted, DHEO and the service provider conduct an orientation for the family prior to the start of camp, which helps them understand what to expect.

Since this respite opportunity began in 2022, DHEO has provided 10 summer camp opportunities to 168 children whose ages range from 5 to 14. The 101 relative caregivers benefitting from DHEO's summer camp respite service to date have typically been women with low incomes who are aged 65+, have a chronic illness, and have cared for the child for at least five years. Children receive nutritious meals and snacks, which alleviates some of the caregiver's financial burden of feeding the children during the summer.

## **Partnership and Collaboration**

DHEO partners with service providers that host the camp at their sites. Shared leadership is a key to success. Prior to 2025, Easterseals was the primary camp provider, offering a structured curriculum, therapy, resource counseling, intergenerational programming, transportation, and meals. They have a qualified and trained workforce of camp counselors who are early childhood educators, as well as speech, occupational, and art therapists. To respond to the growing demand for the respite service, in 2025, DHEO issued a Request for Proposals to summer camp service providers in the Youngstown area and selected four providers: Easterseals, Alta Behavioral Healthcare, Camp Frederick, and the Jewish Community Center of Youngstown.

As the local Area Agency on Aging, DHEO has other community partners that collaborate on service provision to older kin caregivers. They also coordinate with their county children's services agency to address the needs of the children and refer them to services. DHEO has found engagement in the county's Family and Children First Council, comprised of leaders of government agencies, community-based organizations, schools, and other organizations that provide services to children, invaluable. DHEO has found that these partners play a central role in recruiting relative caregivers for this opportunity and ensuring camp enrollment reaches capacity.

## **Evidence and Continuous Quality Improvement**

At the end of the camp session, DHEO asks relative caregivers to complete a survey to indicate their overall satisfaction with the summer camp, if and how it met their expectations, if the children enjoyed the experience, and if the caregiver benefited from the intended respite opportunity. The survey also asks for recommendations for improvement. Additionally, DHEO calls each caregiver to gather anecdotal evidence of satisfaction and success. The service provider tracks the child's attendance, which helps them assess the extent to which they are meeting their enrollment goals. DHEO reviews the survey results and lessons learned with service providers and uses them to

inform improvements to the camp experience, enrollment process, and orientation sessions. In 2025, the summer camp respite opportunity received a 97.5% satisfaction rate and 96% of respondents said that the children enjoyed their experience.

## Tips for Replication

- ▶ **Providing transportation to and from camp is important for kinship families, so focus on finding service partners that can offer this.** If that's not an option, try to offer gas cards, especially to kin caregivers in rural areas.
- ▶ **Try to have multiple service providers that can provide camp experiences that meet the diverse circumstances of kinship families.** For example, DHEO's multiple service providers allow relative caregivers the choice to send their children to a camp that has a shorter day but provides transportation or one that has a full-day camp schedule but doesn't provide transportation.
- ▶ **As you establish your camp attendance goals, create a waitlist.** Enrolled families will drop off prior to the start of camp due to unforeseen circumstances. A waitlist will help you account for that and still meet your enrollment goals.
- ▶ **Develop a thoughtful outreach plan to ensure that the respite opportunity is promoted to your target audience.** While organizations focused on serving older adults may be inclined to promote a respite opportunity in locations frequented by adults age 55+, DHEO has found that the "follow the child" strategy works best for dissemination. For example, public and private schools, daycare centers, community/family events, family resource centers, and other places where children are present can be effective places to distribute flyers.
- ▶ **Consider other funding opportunities** in addition to NFCSP funding. If you can tell a story about how your respite practice is promoting family stabilization, funders will see it as a good investment.
- ▶ **If your program is an Area Agency on Aging or another agency outside of children's services, learn what you can about child welfare, children's services, and the legal circumstances of kin caregivers.** It is helpful to have some general knowledge about the needs and circumstances of the families as you assess them for respite services. DHEO also recommends asking the caregivers about any disabilities the children may have and selecting camp partners who can be responsive to the children's needs. Easterseals, for example, has many years of experience serving children and adults with disabilities across their programming, making them a good partner for DHEO.
- ▶ **Prepare for and plan to offer additional services on top of the respite service, if you do not already.** DHEO's respite service resulted in caregiver communication and engagement that drove an expansion of their services

beyond respite. By listening to caregivers through assessments and service provision, DHEO realized their clients' significant needs for clothing, food, concrete goods, social activities, and more, and they responded accordingly.

## Additional Practice Resources

To learn more about this practice, review the links below.

- ▶ [Summer Camp Flyer](#)
- ▶ [Camp Satisfaction Survey for Kin Caregivers](#)

## Learn More about the Network's Exemplary Practice Designation

If you have questions about any of the practices profiled here or are interested in learning more or replicating one of these practices, please complete this short [form](#) and we will get back to you.

For information about the steps and criteria of the Exemplary designation process, please click [here](#).

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The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, Tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit [www.GKSNetwork.org](http://www.GKSNetwork.org).

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