



Respite Care Research

What is respite care, and how does it relate to youth mental health?

Respite care is a short break for parents or caregivers who are taking care of a child with serious needs. In youth mental health, it helps reduce stress, supports the relationship between the caregiver and child, and helps the child stay safely at home instead of needing emergency care or being placed outside the home. In Ohio, programs like OhioRISE define respite care as temporary support that can take place at home or in the community.

Research shows that respite care is important because it helps lower caregiver stress and improves family well-being. It can also make it easier for families to care for children with mental health, behavioral, or other complex needs. Caregivers of these children often experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout, so having breaks like respite care can make a big difference

Who may need respite care?

Respite care is helpful for families who have children or teens with serious emotional or behavioral challenges, frequent crises, or who need a lot of supervision. This can include children with autism, trauma, or developmental disabilities. It is also useful when caregivers feel overwhelmed, tired, or stressed, or are having trouble keeping things stable at home.

In Ohio, programs like OhioRISE support youth under 21 with complex mental health needs, and respite care is one way to help these families stay stable.

How does someone access respite care?

In Ohio, how you get respite care depends on what programs your child is part of. If your child is in OhioRISE, respite care is usually included in their care plan and set up through a care coordinator or referral system. A referral is sent in, and then a provider contacts the family to schedule services. Respite can happen at home, in the community, or sometimes in another approved setting.

If your family is not connected to OhioRISE, you can start by talking to a therapist, care coordinator, local mental health agency, or county board. They can help guide you through the process and see if your child qualifies.

If your child is in a crisis, Ohio also offers Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS). This is a free service for youth under 21, and you can access it by calling 988 and asking for MRSS.

Cost, waivers, and insurance coverage

For eligible youth enrolled in OhioRISE, medically necessary Medicaid-covered behavioral health services are covered at no cost to the member, and behavioral health respite is an OhioRISE-covered service subject to program rules and authorization requirements. Ohio materials consistently state that each OhioRISE member can receive up to 50 days of behavioral health respite without prior authorization, with additional days requiring approval by the OhioRISE plan.

Ohio also has an OhioRISE 1915(c) waiver for some youth with the most complex behavioral health and multisystem needs, especially those who might need psychiatric institutional care. In addition, families of children with developmental disabilities may qualify for respite through DODD waivers or county DD family support programs rather than through behavioral-health-specific funding. Respite care is often funded, but only through the right eligibility pathway. Private insurance alone does not reliably cover traditional respite unless it is embedded in a specific Medicaid waiver or managed care benefit

Some children with developmental disabilities may qualify for respite care through different programs, such as DD waivers or county support programs, instead of behavioral health programs like OhioRISE.

This means that respite care is often covered, but only if the child qualifies for the right program. Private insurance alone usually does not cover respite care unless it is part of Medicaid or a waiver program.

[Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board](#) – Helps plan and fund mental health services in the county and connects families to providers. They are often the first place families go to figure out what services are available.

They do not directly provide respite care, but they help families get connected to agencies that do. If a child qualifies for OhioRISE, the board can help guide families to that program. Through OhioRISE or local providers, families may be able to receive short-term care that gives caregivers a break. Access depends on eligibility, and sometimes there can be waitlists.

[Lighthouse Youth & Family Services](#) – A local organization that provides many services for youth and families, including counseling, crisis support, and case management. They work closely with schools and community programs.

Lighthouse can help connect families to respite care and may include short-term relief services as part of their programs. They often work with OhioRISE to make sure families get the support they need. Their staff may help families set up services and check in to make sure things are going well.

[Child & Family Health Collaborative of Ohio](#) – This organization helps manage care coordination for children with complex behavioral health needs. They work behind the scenes to make sure services are organized and approved.

They play an important role in setting up respite care, especially for families in OhioRISE. They

help with referrals, approvals, and matching families with the right providers. They also make sure services are meeting the family's needs and can help adjust services if needed.

[Hamilton County Developmental Disabilities Services](#) – Supports children and adults who have developmental disabilities by offering services, resources, and funding through waiver programs.

Families who qualify can receive respite through Medicaid waivers or local funding. This allows trained providers to care for the child so caregivers can rest or take time for other responsibilities. This type of respite is separate from mental health services and is based on having a developmental disability diagnosis. There may be application steps and waiting lists depending on the program.

[Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Board](#) - Plans and funds mental health and addiction services in Butler County and connects families to local providers.

Families can access respite by being referred to providers funded by the board or through OhioRISE. In some cases, respite is included as part of in-home or crisis services, even if it is not always called “respite care.” Availability depends on the provider and the child's needs.

[Clermont County Mental Health and Recovery Board](#) - Helps coordinate mental health services and supports for individuals and families in Clermont County.

Families may be connected to respite providers through agencies funded by the board or through OhioRISE. Services are based on eligibility, and families may need to go through an intake or referral process. Some respite may also be offered as part of broader behavioral health services.

[Mental Health Recovery Board serving Warren and Clinton Counties](#) - Oversees and funds mental health services across both counties and helps families find support.

Families can be referred to respite providers through the board or through OhioRISE. However, these counties may have fewer providers, so families might need to travel or use services outside their county. Access depends on eligibility, and there may be limited availability.

Resources

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<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1538544217301396>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27592275/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36030352/>

<https://dbh.ohio.gov/get-help/treatment-services/respice>

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-5160-59-03.4>

Who may need respite care?

<https://managedcare.medicaid.ohio.gov/managed-care/ohiorise>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3263847/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1538544217301396>

<https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-5160-59-03.4>

How does someone access respite care?

<https://dbh.ohio.gov/get-help/crisis-systems/mobile-response-and-stabilization-services-mrсс>

<https://www.aetnabetterhealth.com/ohiorise/find-provider>

Cost, waivers, and insurance coverage

https://www.aetnabetterhealth.com/content/dam/aetna/medicaid/ohio-rise/pdf/OhioRISE_Member_Handbook.pdf

<https://managedcare.medicaid.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/a81a1aee-e68e-40ae-8b12-14aabb3cfa7a/OhioRISE+Provider+Enrollment+and+Billing+Guidance.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=oV2pgf9>

<https://medicaid.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/9f7506a7-17f2-41e3-890a-6a5e3c721932/OhioRISE+Waiver+Overview+for+Children%2C+Youth%2C+and+Caregivers.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=oV2pkIY>

<https://medicaid.ohio.gov/families-and-individuals/citizen-programs-and-initiatives/hcbs/hcbs-programs>

<https://dodd.ohio.gov/waivers-and-services/waivers/>

<https://www.hcmhrsb.org/>

<https://www.hcmhrsb.org/getting-help/provider-directory/>

<https://www.lys.org/services/ohiorise/>

<https://www.cfhcoho.org/respice-care>

<https://www.hamiltonddsohio.gov/>

<https://www.hamiltonddsOhio.gov/services/start-here/>

<https://mhars.bcoho.gov/>

<https://ccmhrb.org/>

<https://managedcare.medicaid.ohio.gov/managed-care/ohiorise>