

## Finding and Training Direct Caregivers for Children

The easing of pandemic restrictions has many of us ready to invite direct caregivers back into our homes. Direct caregivers can help ease the stress we've been experiencing over the last year, and they are welcome new faces in our kids' lives. However, the struggle to find caregivers is harder than ever, which has led some agencies to require that families find their own caregivers.

While there are no easy solutions to the shortage of direct caregivers, Family Voices has put together some guidelines and tips to help you find the best caregiver for your family.

**1<sup>st</sup>** Think about the **qualities you need** in your child's direct caregiver. Do you need someone to be a friend and companion? Someone who has a lot of flexibility to work on short notice? Or, are you looking for someone competent with complex medical needs? You may need to prioritize and decide what is most important right now.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Know **your expectations**. Be as realistic as possible about the responsibilities of the position. This will save you time and energy when you're interviewing. This will also give candidates a better understanding of what's expected, which will likely lead them to stick with the position longer.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Look at your **family's schedules** to decide when having a direct caregiver works best for your family. Be ready with other times and dates that also work because your child's direct caregiver may not be able to exactly match your first-choice schedule.

### Finding a Direct Caregiver

Tell everyone you know that you're looking for a direct caregiver for your child. Let your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors know about the position.

Contact the people in your child's life like aides and student teachers at your child current and former schools as well as daycare. Workers at your child's sports programs, after-school or summer camps may also be interested.

High school and college students who are interested in health care, education and social work make great caregivers and may want some "real world" experience working with your family. Contact tech schools or colleges in your area to learn how to post on job boards for programs related to caregiving.

The Respite Care Association of Wisconsin manages the new [Wisconsin Respite Care Registry](#). This is a database of potential respite care providers throughout the state, organized by county.

For more ideas on finding caregivers and information on interviewing and paying direct caregivers, see our new Fact Sheet, [Finding and Hiring Direct Caregivers](#).



### Resource for Families

Respite Care Association of Wisconsin

[respitcarewi.org](http://respitcarewi.org)

- ✓ Free training courses
- ✓ Grants to pay respite providers
- ✓ Registry of available providers

# Did You Know? Now You Know!

## Keeping Your Direct Caregivers

Over time caregivers become like members of your family. They are indispensable to your child and they know your expectations, so it's necessary to let them know how important they are. Here are a few tips to help you hold onto your wonderful direct caregivers for as long as possible.

**Maintain Open Communication:** Communicate the responsibilities of the job from the start. Be clear and honest about your expectations. Encourage the caregiver to ask questions about your child whenever necessary. Talking through these situations, and how best to respond to your child, will empower him/her to work more independently.

**Get to Know Your Caregiver:** While it may not be appropriate to ask too many personal questions, most providers appreciate being asked about what is going on in their lives. This shows that you care about their life and their well-being.

**Make Sure They Feel Valued:** Recognize when the caregiver does a good job. This small kindness will energize and motivate him/her to continue to work with your child. You can send them a thank you note or email their supervisor to say that you appreciate what they do for your family.

**Learn What Motivates Them:** Your caregivers are likely not doing this job just for the money, so get creative about finding ways to keep them coming back. You could have a fresh pot of coffee ready or bake them a treat. Some families like to give gift cards or other small tokens of appreciation at the holidays.

**Stick to Your Schedule:** Respect your caregiver's time by returning when you said you would. Don't ask them to work at the last minute too often. And, be understanding if they need a day off for another obligation.



### Tip for Families



**Be Open to a New Approach:** Realize there might be more than one way to get something done when it comes to caring for your child's needs. Your new caregiver could have a different way of doing a task than you. But you and your child might learn from your new caregiver. As long as it is done in a safe, respectful way, be open to a new approach.

### Is Respite Care the same as Personal Care Services?

Many children with disabilities qualify for respite care and/or personal care services. These two programs have different rules and are covered by different funding sources, so it's important to understand how they differ. Personal care services can be covered by your child's ForwardHealth card. Respite, on the other hand, can be paid for through Children's Long-Term Supports (CLTS or CCOP) and for those over age 18, can be covered by Family Care or IRIS.

Personal care services for a child or an adult assist with activities of daily living like feeding, toileting or dressing, and **must** be provided in your home. Respite services can be provided anywhere a child might be, like a park, grandma's house or out in the community, and are meant to give time off for families.

To learn more, see our Fact Sheets: [Medicaid Personal Care Services](#), and [Respite Services for Children with Disabilities](#).

**Northeast Region**  
Children's Hospital  
of Wisconsin  
Fox Valley  
877.568.5205

**Northern Region**  
Marathon County  
Health Dept.  
Wausau  
866.640.4106

**Southeast Region**  
Children's Hospital  
Milwaukee  
800.234.5437

**Southern Region**  
Waisman Center  
Madison  
800.532.3321

**Western Region**  
Chippewa County  
Dept of Public Health  
Chippewa Falls  
800.400.3678

# Wisconsin Budget Update

Governor Evers signed the 2021 - 2023 state budget on July 7. Family Voices was disappointed to learn that the proposal to create a statewide [Disability Resource Center for Children and Families](#) was not included in the final budget bill. We will continue our advocacy efforts on this issue.

For a complete summary, and how this budget will impact people with disabilities and their families, go to the [Survival Coalition of Wisconsin](#).

## A Check List for Training New Caregivers

Part of hiring new caregivers means taking the time to thoroughly train them. They won't last long if they are put into situations that they didn't expect, can't handle or feel unsupported by your family. Be specific and don't assume the worker knows how you want something done. Some families find that creating a training checklist is helpful, so nothing is missed. Here are some ideas to include on your check list.

- **Seizures:** Explain what they look like and the correct response.
- **Directions:** For care like g-tube feeding, diabetic care, toileting or other personal care needs.
- **Behaviors:** What are the challenges and the best way to deal with them.
- **Communication:** Training on your child's communication device, hand gestures or key words you use with your child.
- **Emergencies:** Share your emergency care plan including the names of your child's doctors, phone numbers and preferred hospital.

You can then give the new caregiver time with your child while you are still home. Step away for a few minutes and then check back in to see if he/she has questions. Slowly give them more time together without interruption.

### Want to Learn More?



For more information on our articles visit these websites:

Family Voices of Wisconsin  
[familyvoiceswi.org](http://familyvoiceswi.org)

National Family Voices  
[familyvoices.org](http://familyvoices.org)

Respite Care Association of Wisconsin  
[respitecarewi.org](http://respitecarewi.org)

Survival Coalition/  
Budget Summary  
[survivalcoalitionwi.org](http://survivalcoalitionwi.org)

## Family Voices Trainings

It's time reserve your virtual training date for Fall 2021

Our trainings have valuable information for any group—big or small. But our training calendar fills up quickly, so:

- 1) Select a training
- 2) Choose a date
- 3) Contact Lynn at [lynn@fvofwi.org](mailto:lynn@fvofwi.org)

All Our Trainings are **FREE!**



### What's After High School?

Learn about the **transition** to adult life for youth with disabilities and special health care needs.



### Coordinating Your Child's Health Care

This training was created to help you **partner with your child's care team**.



### Did You Know? Now You Know!

Explains all the resources and services for children with disabilities and special health care needs from **birth through young adulthood**.



### Medicaid Made Easy

You'll learn about Wisconsin's Medicaid programs. Most importantly, it's focused on how these programs work to **cover what your child needs!**

Each family has a voice • Together, our voices will be heard

[familyvoiceswi.org](http://familyvoiceswi.org)



PO Box 5070  
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

## Summer 2021 Volume 16, Issue 2

This newsletter is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H84MC21690-01-00. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

Want to stay informed about Family Voices?

“Like” us on Facebook!



### Connect With Us!

[familyvoiceswi.org](http://familyvoiceswi.org)

#### Co-Directors

Liz Hecht, [liz@fvofwi.org](mailto:liz@fvofwi.org)

Barbara Katz, [barb@fvofwi.org](mailto:barb@fvofwi.org)

#### Information and Outreach Manager

Lynn Renner, [lynn@fvofwi.org](mailto:lynn@fvofwi.org)

#### Media and Education Manager

Brigit Frank, [brigit@fvofwi.org](mailto:brigit@fvofwi.org)

Nonprofit

Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Madison, WI

Permit No. 1222



This is our **LAST** print issue!

To keep getting our newsletter give us your email address at:

[familyvoiceswi.org/connect](http://familyvoiceswi.org/connect)

And enjoy our articles on any electronic device.



### About Family Voices

If you have a child with a disability or special health care need, you’ve come to the right place! We’re here to help you **navigate** the services available to your family. It’s a complicated system and our goal is to provide you and your family with some tools. **Connect** with other families, learn how to **advocate** for your child, and discover how you can be a voice for all children with special needs.

Each family has a voice • Together, our voices will be heard

[familyvoiceswi.org](http://familyvoiceswi.org)

**Direct Caregiver:** An assistant to help you with caregiving responsibilities for your child with special health care needs. A direct caregiver can give **respite** which is a break, or time off, from your caregiving duties. Or, a direct caregiver can do **personal care services** or activities of daily living for your child including meal preparation, feeding, bathing and toileting.



### Where Do I Find a Direct Caregiver?

**Word of Mouth:** Tell friends, neighbors and coworkers that you're looking for a direct caregiver. And, reach out to organizations like your faith community, neighborhood association or parent support groups.

**Your Child's School:** Talk to teachers, therapists and aides at your child's current and former schools. Explain that you're looking and give them a description of the position to share with others.

**Colleges and Technical Schools:** Find students studying health care, education, nursing, social work or related fields. Mature high-school students may also be an option during school breaks.

**Job Boards:** These can be online or physical job boards. Respite programs or personal care agencies can help you find job boards in your community.

**Community Programs:** Contact local programs that serve children like the YMCA, summer camps, after-school programs and swimming or other sports clubs.

**Place Ads:** Local newspapers, neighborhood newsletters and local Facebook groups are inexpensive ways to find help.



### A Good Idea!

Be open minded when you interview potential direct caregivers. Candidates who don't have years of experience may still be good caregivers if they are bright, motivated and eager to learn about your child.



### How do I Pay for Direct Caregivers?

You have choices to cover the cost of direct caregivers. [Medicaid personal care services](#)<sup>+</sup> are funded by your child's ForwardHealth card, while [respite care](#)<sup>+</sup> can be funded by the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program or the Children's Community Options (CCOP) program. (\*We have **fact sheets** on these topics!)

The CLTS Program also allows families to use **self-directed supports** to let you to choose, hire and manage your workers directly. A fiscal employer agent will then support your family in self-directing your workers.



### Can I Hire Family Members?

If your child is under age 18, Wisconsin Medicaid may allow you to hire a relative as a direct caregiver. For youth over age 18, parents can be hired to provide personal care services.\* And, respite programs may let you hire relatives, including older siblings.

\*Special, temporary, pandemic policy changes allow parents of children, under age 18, and on long-term supports, to be paid to provide direct care including childcare, respite and supportive home care. Contact your child's service coordinator to learn more.

## INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL DIRECT CAREGIVERS

You might be looking for a direct caregiver to help your child with activities of daily living or someone to give you a break from your caregiving. But before you start interviewing, it's important to know your needs. Think about your family's routines and your child's likes and dislikes. The following **interview guidelines** have more suggestions so you find the best direct caregiver for your family:



### How do I Start?

- Invite potential direct caregivers to your home to make sure they're a good fit with your family.
- Make time for the caregiver and your child to get to know each other.
- Explain your child's medical and/or behavioral conditions and ask about their experience with them.
- Be specific about the days and times that your family needs a direct caregiver.
- Describe what you are looking for in a worker and what their time with your child will look like.
- Talk about special rules, or expectations, you have for caregivers. For instance, you may need the worker to call if he/she is running late.



### A Good Idea!

**Try Role Play:** Give candidates a situation, like your child has a seizure in the park, and ask how they react to it. If they don't know, do they ask you appropriate questions? Are they open to learning? Can they deal with a stressful situation?



### Which Questions Should I Ask?

- Do they have experience working with children with special needs?
  - If not, have they been a babysitter or a caregiver for a sibling?
- How many hours are they able to work?
  - Do they have flexibility to work with your family more often or on short notice?
  - For students, will their schedule change each semester?
- Do they have reliable transportation?
  - Will they need to find a ride? take a bus? or are they close enough to walk or bike?
- Are they comfortable with all the duties of the position?
  - Can they use equipment? change diapers? prepare meals? and react appropriately to behaviors?



### I Found the Perfect Direct Caregiver! Now What?

When you identify a caregiver to provide respite or personal care, a home health care agency or fiscal assistance program will need to hire the person, as Medicaid **cannot** pay the person directly. The candidate will likely have to complete an application, take part in training, and have a background check done, which could all take several weeks.



### Still Have Questions? Need Help Finding Services for Your Child?

- [Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm)  
dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm
- [Well Badger Resource Center](https://wellbadger.org) wellbadger.org or call 800.642.7837