

Updated: April 7, 2020

## Common Questions and Answers for Parents regarding Respite and Emergency Relief

**Q1: What do families need to know about Direct Funded/At Home Respite Agreements expiring between April 1 and June 30, 2020?**

**A1:** Families who have Basic At Home Program or Direct Funded Respite Agreements (\$256.66/month) expiring during this period will not need to provide Record of Respite Expense Forms to their CYSN Worker to verify how funds were used over the past year.

The monthly payment will continue to families who will have a two month time frame to submit a copy of a signed Agreement.

Families should keep a Record of Expense Form for all new/renewed agreements going forward.

**Q2 What do families need to know about Enhanced Respite Agreements expiring between April 1 and June 30, 2020?**

**A2:** Families with an Enhanced Respite Agreement (over\$256.66/ month) expiring during this time period will need to contact their CYSN worker about renewing their Agreement. Families will be required to continue submitted Records of Expense Forms for Enhanced Respite Agreements expiring during the Covid-19 period. CYSN workers will consider the need for flexibility when reviewing Records for the Covid-19 period.

**Q3: What flexibility do families have with their Respite funds during this COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Q3:** If during this time period families are unable to hire a Respite caregiver to give them a break, they may choose to use their funds later when they can hire someone or explore flexible options for a break from caregiving activities including:

- meal prep/grocery shopping assistance
- home maker supports
- caregiver relief support (e.g. family member providing care for children)
- on-line programs for children who are CYSN eligible
- counselling services
- and other services that support family functioning

Families who would like support in planning for Respite through this period can contact their CYSN worker.

**Q4: Are there expenses that Respite funding should not be used for?**

**A4:**

- To supplement employment income or other income supports/benefits including Provincial/Federal programs related to COVID- 19.
- For typical parenting costs such as purchase of toys, games, entertainment and cleaning supplies etc.
- For expenses already covered under other funding programs i.e. medical benefits and Autism Funding. If these are not approved by medical benefits or autism funding they cannot be subsequently purchased with Respite. Families can talk to their CYSN worker if they have concerns.

**Q5. Can respite be used for equipment, toys, food, etc. for my child with special needs?**

**A5:** Respite is not to be used for purchases of items that are part of basic parenting costs. There are federal, provincial and community programs that are offering specific supports to address income/hardship during this COVID pandemic. If families are not aware of these programs, they can contact their CYSN worker.

**Q6. What measures will be put in place to reduce risk for respite workers and the children / youth and families they serve with workers going from home to home?**

**A6:** MCFD staff encourage families utilizing respite services to follow the recommendations of the Public Health officer. Many families of children with special needs are choosing to interact with a very small group of people and are carefully following public directives related to social distancing, limiting contact with non-family members and minimizing the risk of contagion. For that reason, many families are relying on members of their inner circle to provide much needed respite and are ensuring that those who are providing support are following public health measures including physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and self-isolation.

Respite workers are similarly doing what they can to keep themselves healthy and to preserve the well-being of the families they serve. For this reason, they are striving to provide support in accordance with guidelines laid out by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)

- Follow preventative measures such as regular hand washing, not touching the face, and avoiding contact with individuals demonstrating symptoms.

- The number of different staff that support individuals at all times should be kept to the minimum number operationally possible. This is to reduce the likelihood of transmission from staff to individuals and individuals to staff.
- Transportation of individuals should allow for physical distancing to be maintained between individuals and staff, and ideally should be kept to a minimum.

There are also respite homes that are funded directly by MCFD. These resources can be family care homes (Foster Homes) and staffed homes (Contracted Residential Agency operated homes). MCFD supports and has been communicating regularly with all Foster Homes and Contracted Residential Agencies. This [communication](#) includes information on the guidelines and recommendations from the BCCDC.

**Q7: What are families doing to access Respite workers during this time?**

**A7:** Families are looking first to their inner circle and are relying primarily on those who have regular contact with their child. To support this, we have introduced increased flexibility that allow families to achieve the break this service is intended to provide in a manner that maintains the health and well-being of all involved (e.g. allowing them to purchase respite from family members or use that funding for home-making services).

Additionally, families may use their allocated funds in a manner that best meets their needs. For some families, this typically means short breaks throughout the week and for others it means saving funds for overnight / weekend respite. During this period, many families and respite providers are working together to create a schedule that allows everyone involved to remain safe and healthy.

**Q8: Is there any additional funding to support families through the pandemic?**

**A8:** MCFD has created a temporary Covid-19 Emergency Relief Support fund for families that offers flexibility and assistance in alleviating some of the compounding pressures of COVID19 pandemic and raising children/youth with special needs. (See Q3) Families should contact their CYSN worker.

**Q9: Who should families contact if they have questions?**

**A9:** Families can phone their CYSN worker.