

# Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program

## 🌀 Frequently Asked Questions 🌀

### What is the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program?

The Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program (VLRVP) provides reimbursement to Primary Family Caregivers for the cost of temporary, short-term respite care provided to individuals of any age with a disability or chronic condition.

In order to be eligible for this program you must live in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must be a primary caregiver of a loved one with a documented disability or medical condition, and you must reside at least part-time with your loved one. Voucher funding is limited to a total of \$595 per household. Voucher funding will continue until June 30, 2026 or when funds are exhausted. Families may apply for the program once per year. Please continue to read below for frequently asked questions about the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program.

- 1. What is Respite?** Respite is well-deserved time off. The Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2006 defines respite care as “planned or emergency care provided to a child or adult with a special need in order to provide temporary relief to the family caregiver of that child or adult.”
- 2. Who is the Primary Family Caregiver?** The Primary Family Caregiver is the family member or other adult providing ongoing unpaid care for an adult or child with a disability.
- 3. Who is the Respite Care Recipient?** The Care Recipient can be a person of any age with any type(s) of disability or chronic condition.
- 4. Who is the Respite Provider?** The respite provider is an individual or agency selected by a family or caregiver to provide respite to an individual with special needs.
- 5. What are types of Respite?** Types of respite vary and can include: skilled or unskilled care, the use of formal providers who are hired and trained by an agency, or informal providers that are available through family and friends and/or religious organizations.
- 6. Will DARS arrange the Respite Care?** DARS does not provide or arrange for respite care. This DARS program is participant-directed. YOU are responsible for selecting, hiring, training, and paying a respite care provider of your choice, at a time that is convenient for you and your loved one. Respite and caregiver resources are available through the Virginia Family Caregiver Solutions center at <https://vf.virginianavigator.org/> or via internet searches.
- 7. Can I hire a Respite Provider who lives in my home or is under 18?** If you choose to select a respite care provider yourself, the individual selected to provide the respite care **MUST** be at least 18 years old and cannot be someone who currently resides in your home. You are also responsible for negotiating the rate of pay with the respite care provider you select. The program allows for a maximum rate of \$15.00 per hour for an individual and \$25.00 per hour for an agency
- 8. Can I use my current Respite Provider?** Yes, you may, but program funds cannot be used to replace current funding for respite or to pay for respite just to allow the caregiver to work. Funding must be used to provide services that allow the caregiver to take a break from caregiving duties. It must go “above and beyond” what is currently being received.
- 9. Can I use the reimbursement for different care services/days?** The \$595 does not have to be used all at once; it can be spread over several periods of respite care.

If you have questions or need assistance completing this application contact:

Liza White [liza.white@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:liza.white@dars.virginia.gov) (804) 662-7650

Or call toll free at: +1-800-552-3402

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10. **Is there a deadline to use the funding?** Yes. Once approved, you will have until the end of your voucher period (typically 90 days) to utilize services and request a reimbursement through the program.
11. **What is considered valid verification of disability or medical condition?** Documentation must be less than two years old and can be verified in a variety of ways. A written doctor's note stating the care receiver's name and diagnosis, hospital visit summary, an IEP, and Social Security determination letters are sources of valid documentation. Other document types may also be valid if it contains at minimum: the care receiver's name, diagnosis, medical condition or statement regarding disability from an official source.
12. **What if I have multiple disabled family members living in my home?** Even if you have more than one person in your home who will receive respite services, the maximum amount for reimbursement is \$595 per household. If you care for more than one disabled family member that you would like to use this program for, you will have to provide information for them all.
13. **What are the qualifications of the program?** Requirements are as follows: The family caregiver and care recipient must reside within the Commonwealth of Virginia. If the family currently receives respite or other care, funds cannot be used to replace current funding for respite/daycare. Funds cannot be used so the family caregiver can work. Documentation of disability must be submitted with the application.
14. **What is the \$595 for?** Funding must be used to provide services that allow the caregiver to take a break from caregiving duties.
15. **When will I know if my application has been approved?** If you are eligible for the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program and funds are still available, you will be notified of approval within 30 days from the date the application is received by DARS.
16. **What is considered valid proof of payment for respite services?** Valid proof of payment includes invoices from formal respite providers showing payment, bank statements showing a copy of cashed checks, screenshots from money transfer apps (Venmo, Zelle, PayPal, CashApp), money order receipts, or valid signed statements regarding cash payments. Voided checks, copies of uncashed checks, or statements regarding cash payments not signed by both the caregiver and respite provider are NOT considered valid proof of payment for this program. Also, the amount incurred on the reimbursement form and the amount listed on the proof of payment MUST be identical.
17. **When will I receive the reimbursement?** It can take up to 45 days from the date your Reimbursement packet is received by DARS to get your reimbursement check from the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program. This is in accordance with Virginia's Prompt Payment Act.  
**PLEASE NOTE:** If you have an existing government debt, you may not receive your entire refund.
18. **Can I pay the Respite Provider more than \$595?** The DARS Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program will send a check to you, the Primary Family Caregiver, to reimburse you for payment you have made to the selected respite care provider, not to exceed \$595/household. You will be reimbursed only for actual expenses that are documented and submitted to DARS. You may pay more than the voucher amount you requested from DARS, but YOU will be responsible for making up the difference between the amount approved through the Lifespan Respite Voucher Program and what you have agreed to pay the provider.

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19. **Can I use this program if I have Medicaid, Medicare or receive respite through another service?** You will not be disqualified for this program if you receive Medicaid or Medicare or receive respite through another program. We encourage individuals to seek out other resources for help with their family member. Use of respite services allows the family caregiver to provide better care for longer periods of time, if needed. If the family currently receives respite services, funds cannot be used to replace current funding for respite or to pay for respite just to allow the caregiver to work. Funding must be used to provide services that allow the caregiver to take a break from caregiving duties. It must go “above and beyond” what is currently being received.
20. **Does the *W-9 Form* mean that I have to pay taxes on the money I receive?** The reimbursement check will be mailed to the address you indicate on the W-9 Form. The W-9 Form is required by the Commonwealth in order to issue the reimbursement check; it is not sent to the IRS or any other entity for tax purposes.
21. **Will the check be sent to the Respite Provider?** Reimbursement checks will be made payable to you, the primary caregiver, and not to the respite care provider in most instances. You are responsible for payment to your respite care provider. The reimbursement check will be mailed to the address you indicate on the **W-9 Form**. If you choose to utilize a respite agency and have trouble paying upfront for the total cost, direct payment may be arranged between DARS and the respite provider agency, but this must be communicated with DARS shortly after approval.
22. **What is the Caregiver KIT? Is it required to use this program?** The Respite Care Association of Wisconsin (RCAW) offers a variety of free online training courses for both caregivers and respite workers on many topics. The Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program is developing its own training material, but until it is completed, the grant program recommends the RCWA [How to Hire, Train, and Retain Respite Providers](#). This is an excellent out-of-state resource that may assist caregivers who use this program. We encourage all caregivers to complete it, but it is not required.
23. **What is the support group for? Is it required to use this program?** The Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program is piloting a quarterly support group for caregivers who are reimbursed through the program as a way to provide ongoing information and support about the needs and wants of the caregivers who attend the sessions. It is also an opportunity for caregivers across the state to connect with each other and to provide valuable feedback about the Lifespan Respite Voucher Program. The group is encouraged, but it is not required to use this program.