

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

353 West Julian Street
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DATE: September 29, 2020

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director *RM*

SUBJECT: **Off-Agenda Report on Utilization of the Newly Augmented Respite Program Available to Resource Caregivers**

At the June 23, 2020 Board of Supervisors (Board) meeting, the Board approved changes to the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) respite program to include the following: 1) increase the number of respite hours available to caregivers to 300 per year; 2) increase the number of children per family who can use respite care to six; 3) increase pay for respite care providers to \$24.56 per hour, plus \$7 per additional child; and, 4) allow caregivers' adopted, guardian, and biological children to receive care under DFCS's respite program. (Item no. 36). During the meeting, Supervisor Chavez requested the Administration to provide the Board a report on utilization of the newly augmented program two months after implementation.

DFCS initiated its improved respite care program on July 1, 2020. In addition to the programmatic changes above, DFCS implemented the following parameters for the program in consultation and collaboration with the Kinship, Adoptive, and Foster Parent Association (KAFPA):

- For overnight stays, respite services are eligible for reimbursement for 16 hours. Respite care provided from 10 pm to 6 am is not reimbursable.
- Caregivers seeking respite care must have a child within the dependency system and in out of home care.
- Respite care reimbursement forms are to be signed by both caregiver and respite provider and submitted to Seneca Family of Agencies' (Seneca) Resource and Advocacy Support Services (RASS) respite care coordinator no later than 15 days after respite services were received.
- Respite care usage above 72 continuous hours requires DFCS pre-approval for reimbursement.
- Respite care usage of above 300 hours per year requires DFCS pre-approval.
- Resource parents must sign and submit a Respite Care Program Statement of Understanding acknowledging that they have read and understand the respite care guidelines. The statement of understanding is then submitted to the RASS respite care coordinator.

Outreach to Caregivers

The RASS respite care coordinator worked directly with Resource Family Approval (RFA) families to appraise them of pending changes to the program, forms, and parameters as early as July 6, 2020 including assisting requestors with completing the revised forms. Notice of the changes to DFCS's respite care program was sent to resource families via email from DFCS, RASS, and Catholic Charities' Relative Support Team (RST) on August 20, 2020. Families were also given a copy of the updated program guidelines and forms, which are available in English and Spanish. All families that requested reimbursement for respite care that occurred on or after July 1, 2020 received the increased hours and funding. DFCS is working with RASS and RST to work with resource families to allow additional time to submit the revised request form to RASS to ensure accuracy and completeness to avoid delays in processing payment.

In addition to notifications regarding the updated respite care program, resource families receive assistance in accessing respite services through the RASS team. DFCS's RFA social workers also review the revised respite care program guidelines with all newly approved caregivers. The updated guidelines are included in trainings caregivers participate in prior to approval as an RFA caregiver. Additionally, DFCS staff was provided information on the new provisions to the respite care program and received copies of required forms required to utilize the program, in order to ensure that social workers are aware of this important resource and can assist resource parents with accessing the service.

The below charts show utilization rates for DFCS's respite care program for July and August 2020 compared to the same period in 2019:

Utilization	July 2020*	August 2020
Requests		
• Families (unduplicated)	30	21
• Total requests	127	93
• Total hours	3,937.5	2,042.75
• Reimbursements	\$47,249.06	\$24,090.36
Children Served		
• Foster	203	81
• Biological	10	15
• Guardianship	7	0
• Adopted	9	5
Total	229	101

*One Resource family used over 300 hours of respite care in July.

Utilization	July 2019	August 2019
Requests		
• Families (unduplicated)	39	24
• Total requests	68	52
• Total hours	2,476	1,954
• Reimbursements	\$16,806	\$14,338
Children Served		
• Foster	50	36

As of the writing of this report, all 220 requests for respite care reimbursement from July and August have been funded. The requests for the month of September are being processed within

the required seven-day timeline if there are no issues with submitted request. DFCS has worked with SSA's Financial Management Services to ensure that reimbursements are completed within seven days upon receipt. RASS's respite care coordinator works with caregivers to ensure the necessary information is included in reimbursement requests and works with families to correct any errors that might delay reimbursement. All errors must be corrected before the reimbursement can be submitted for processing.

Resource Family Respite Care Survey Results

DFCS conducted a survey of 454 resource homes regarding the respite care program to better understand caregivers' needs, their understanding and utilization of respite care, and the number of children in their households and received 108 responses¹. A survey link for an online survey was sent to the email address of each primary caregiver and was offered in two languages: English and Spanish. Survey participants had the option to select their preferred language to complete the survey and participation was voluntary and confidential.

Seventy-five percent of the households indicated that they do not need respite care, while three percent indicated that they required 200 hours or more of care per year. Sixty-eight percent of RFA homes have one or two foster children living with them and eleven percent have three or more biological children in their homes.

DFCS also inquired why families may not use the respite care that is available to them. The reasons given include:

13% - Reimbursements took too long

16% - Did not have any foster children in their home during the survey period

24% - Did not need respite

27% - Was not aware of the respite care program

36% - Other reasons

DFCS continues to analyze the survey results and will formulate next steps, including more ways to connect with and educate resource parents, as well as DFCS staff regarding the respite care program.

c: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board

¹ Of the 108 responses, 60 were fully completed and 48 were partially completed.