

RESPIRE CROSSROAD

[Back To Navigating The Caregiver CrossRoads \(main page\)](#)

Definition

This CrossRoad will discuss the formal or informal services available, in or out of the home, that provide direct supervision and/or different levels of care for an older adult, allowing the primary caregiver to be temporarily free of their caregiving duties.

Glossary of Terms

A list of terms you may come across while researching this topic.

Search Our Database

On the Navigating the CrossRoads main page you will find a drop down menu of pre-populated search terms that will bring you to a list of Central Massachusetts agencies and programs that relate to this topic. You may also [CLICK HERE](#) to go to our Guide to Elder Services, an online searchable database, to do more extensive searches or for results in a specific zip code, city/town or Central Massachusetts geographic region. ***If you are unable to find a keyword on the pre-populated list and it consists of two terms, transpose the order of the terms i.e. to search for Overnight Respite use the keyword Respite, Overnight.*

Helpful Links

A list of outside websites to visit for further information.

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Informal Respite](#)

- [Tips to maximize your use of informal respite](#)
 - [Be Open And Honest With Those Around You](#)
 - [Be Specific About How They Can Help](#)
 - [Be Assertive About Burden Of Duties](#)
 - [Keep A CareTeam Binder, Calendar And Blog](#)

[Formal Respite Services](#)

- [Companions](#)
 - [Choosing A Companion](#)
- [Friendly Visitors](#)
- [Adult Day Care](#)
 - [Social Adult Day Care](#)
 - [Medical/Health](#)
 - [Specialized](#)
 - [Choosing An Adult Day Care Program](#)
- [Program Of All-Inclusive Care For The Elderly \(PACE\)](#)
 - [Services Offered Through PACE:](#)
 - [Who Is Eligible For PACE?](#)
 - [How Do I Pay For PACE?](#)
- [Residential Respite Care](#)

This information was written with older adults in mind and is meant to provide a general overview of respite care options for older adults. The information provided does not discuss every aspect of this topic. This information does not constitute legal nor medical advice. We encourage you to consult with competent professional and/or legal representatives for advice.

[Back To Top](#)

Introduction

Taking care of those you are close to can be a natural and rewarding part of life. However, when the caregiving duties become full-time, none of us should have to do it alone. You are not super-human, and you must acknowledge the fact that you need time to relax, recharge, and take care of no one but yourself. In fact, taking this time for self-care is essential to being a good caregiver. If you are depleted of energy and joy, you have nothing to give to others emotionally and physically. If you take the time to treat yourself with care and love, you give yourself the emotional and physical energy to be an understanding, patient and effective caregiver. This is when caregiving becomes rewarding. Respite services are designed to help you as a caregiver take regularly scheduled breaks or time off that you may unexpectedly need. In this CrossRoad, learn about the different types of respite services that are available to older adults and caregivers, like you.

Respite care can be scheduled daily, weekly, monthly, or however often you desire. Some people find it extremely helpful to plan out regularly scheduled respite care so that they know they will always have that particular time to themselves. However, the need for respite care can also be a one-time occurrence such as a planned vacation, or if you become unexpectedly ill. Even if the older adult lives in an assisted living, skilled nursing home or other type of residential facility, respite care is still available. There are many different programs and services available to provide respite for caregivers, like you. Take the time to educate yourself about your options and consider what may be helpful to you now and in the coming years.

Respite services can be arranged formally or informally. Whenever arranging for respite services, be sure that those chosen to provide care are sensitive to the older adult's particular cultural perspective, language and sexual orientation. If you bring anyone into the home that is not provided by a trusted agency, it is a good idea to conduct a background check to make sure the person does not have a criminal record. In Massachusetts, you are able to obtain the personal criminal history for yourself or that of another individual by requesting a copy of the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI). The form you will fill out is the "Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), On Behalf of- Home Health Aide Request form". This form has no fee associated with it but will need to be notarized. This form can be used for various types of in-home care providers such as home health aides, homemakers, companions and individuals who provide chore services. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the Massachusetts Government website to view the form. You may call the Massachusetts CORI Unit of the Department of Criminal Justice Criminal Information Services at 617-660-4640 and request the form. If you do not have access to a computer printer you may choose to visit your local library to print the form. [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security website for more information.

Informal Respite

Informal respite is when a caregiver reaches out to friends, family, neighbors or other acquaintances for help. A family may decide that every Wednesday at 3 'o clock the primary caregiver's brother will play checkers with their father while the primary caregiver takes the afternoon off. Or maybe you would like to attend an out of state wedding and make a one-time arrangement for a friend to come stay with the older adult for the weekend. Usually, caregivers will rely on informal respite before reaching out to formally organized professionals or volunteers. While informal respite can be very helpful to caregivers, organizing your help requires attention and care.

Tips To Maximize Your Use Of Informal Respite

- **Be Open And Honest With Those Around You**

It is important to keep family members and friends up to date on how you and the older adult are doing. People will gain a more accurate sense of the situation and may have ideas about

[Back To Top](#)

what they can do to help. Instead of assuming or hoping that people around you can guess what is going on, make sure they know the real story. In many situations, the caregiver appears to be, or actually has become, so competent that family and friends assume everything is under control and they can do nothing to help. Because of this, we strongly encourage you to make family and friends aware of any need for assistance. You were probably not an expert on caregiving when you first assumed this role. This is something you should explain to your family and friends, telling them that you were just willing to try and encourage them to do the same.

- **Be Specific About How They Can Help**

Instead of vaguely mentioning that you “could use a hand”, be specific about what duties you need completed on what days and at what times. Keep in mind people’s areas of expertise, i.e. accounting, cooking, playing music, exercise. This could give you a hint about how particular people could help out with the older adult. If you feel that a regular commitment (such as taking the older adult to lunch every Tuesday) would make you feel more at ease, ask for this type of arrangement. If you talk specifics, individuals may be more comfortable in accepting a role in the CareTeam. The more CareTeam members you are able to gather, the more confident you will be that help will be available when you need it.

- **Be Assertive About Burden Of Duties**

Amongst the core members of the CareTeam, there are many reasons why duties may not be distributed equally. If you feel like the brunt of the work has unfairly fallen upon you, speak up! Do not assume that others know your situation and are choosing not to offer help. Often, people are so caught up in their own day to day lives that they simply do not realize you are suffering. Additionally, you may appear to be completely competent on your own. Try to avoid making accusations; focus on letting others know that their assistance is needed. Instead of letting your anger bottle up, make it known that you are stressed and ask for more help.

- **Keep A CareTeam Binder, Calendar And Blog**

When family members or friends come into the home, have them contribute to a 3-ring binder recording how the older adult was doing and what activities they engaged in. That way, everyone is up to date on what everyone else is doing and how the older adult is responding. It may also be helpful to keep a communal calendar of who is helping out on what days. If you can use the internet to update both of these tools, everyone can stay informed. There are secured interactive websites which provide updatable calendars and diaries that can be accessed by the core members of your CareTeam. These websites may also connect you with other caregivers for mutual help and support.

Formal Respite Services

If you find that informal respite does not completely meet your needs, there are several types of formal respite services available to caregivers. These services involve trained volunteers or paid staff that provide direct supervision and/or differing levels of care (from social companionship to skilled medical care). These services are offered in the older adult’s own home or in a community facility. Formal respite services are designed to make you feel confident about the older adult’s safety, security and contentedness while you tend to your own needs. Formal respite services range from having someone come into your home for a few hours to socialize with the older adult while you watch a movie or get a massage, to overnight care for the older adult while you are out of town. To hire formal respite care, there may be a minimum requirement on the number of hours of service or length of stay for the older adult. Below is an outline of the different formal respite programs and services available to caregivers, like you.

[Back To Top](#)

Companions

A Companion is somebody who can accompany the older adult while you tend to other activities or just relax. Formal Companion services through an agency may or may not charge a fee. The type of help that a Companion provides MAY include taking the older adult on outings, accompanying them to social activities, escorting them to appointments (medical, hairdresser, etc.), running errands or preparing meals. Companions may not be formally trained and may be available independently or through an agency or referral service. They do not provide medical care, nor do they assist older adults with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). However, they can be extremely helpful to a caregiver who needs some time off from their everyday caregiving duties to rest and recharge their batteries. Spending time with a Companion may be beneficial for the older adult, as they get to see a new face and socialize with someone new or someone who has become a close friend to them.

- Choosing A Companion

If you are interested in a Companion who is available independently (not through an agency), make sure to conduct in-depth interviews in person and thoroughly check their professional and personal references. Ask their references if the person is trustworthy, punctual, reliable and able to handle stressful situations. When speaking to the candidate, be clear about the duties expected of them. You should obtain a candidate's Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI).

Friendly Visitors

Friendly Visitors are volunteers that provide socialization for an older adult in the older adult's own residence, whether their own home/apartment or in a residential facility. They offer support to older adults who may otherwise be socially isolated. While Friendly Visitors do not provide housekeeping, meal preparation, assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) or other custodial duties, they do undergo training in order to provide a positive social experience for older adults. Friendly Visitors are matched by an agency with older adults based on personal interests and other expressed preferences. Often, Friendly Visitors will prompt the older adult to reminisce about their lives, play games and engage in other recreational activities, or play music. They are also trained to provide information about community resources that may be useful to older adults. Make sure that your Friendly Visitor is provided through a trusted agency so that you do not need to worry about conducting a background check. As a caregiver, you can utilize a Friendly Visitor to give the older adult in your life a more varied social experience and ensure that they are less lonely while you attend to other activities.

Adult Day Care

Adult Day Care is an out-of-home service that provides care and social activities for a group of older adults during regular working hours. As a caregiver, you can drop the older adult off for the day while you work, relax or tend to other activities. The goal of Adult Day Care is to foster socialization and self-esteem in older adults. Older adults are given meals and are able to participate in recreational activities in a safe and friendly environment. Sometimes, Adult Day Care can serve as an alternative to living in a residential facility for an older adult. Depending on the Adult Day Care program, services such as transportation to and from the facility, exercise classes, counseling, medical care and physical therapy may be available. Within all three types of Adult Day Care you may find adults of all ages and with varying abilities and challenges participating alongside one another. There are three general types of Adult Day Care:

- Social Adult Day Care

Social Adult Day Care provides meals, recreation and some health related services.

- Medical/Health

Also known as Adult Day Health Services (ADH), this type of day care not only provides meals and recreation, but includes more intensive medical and therapeutic services. Often, older

[Back To Top](#)

adults who would otherwise live in a nursing home prefer to attend ADH during the day to receive their care.

- Specialized
These types of programs cater to older adults with a specific set of needs. For example, a facility may specialize in caring for older adults diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease or Related Disorders. There are other programs that cater to older adults who experience sundown syndrome or what is most commonly referred to as "sundowning". These programs will offer supervised overnight activities for these older adults who display a heightened state of arousal and a variety of behavioral changes, like confusion and agitation. These behaviors typically occur later in the afternoon and get increasingly worse as the evening hours approach.
- Choosing An Adult Day Care Program
Before you explore different programs, make a list of the older adult's and your particular needs and preferences for Adult Day Care. Once you identify one or more programs that may work for you, talk with your CareTeam members. Call the program(s) to speak with staff and request references from past consumers and their families. Eventually, it is important to visit the facility with the older adult and observe the program at different times of day. Pay attention to interactions between older adults and program staff. Also remember that fellow Adult Day Care participants make up an important element of the older adult's experience. [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the National Adult Day Services Association's website for more information.

Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)

PACE is a program that provides all-encompassing care for older adults. The goal of PACE is to provide all of the medical and personal care services that older adults may need through one program. The program includes Adult Day Health Services at a community facility as well as different types of workers that come into the older adult's residence to provide care. Upon enrolling in PACE, each older adult is assessed as to what services they would benefit from. PACE professionals create an individualized service plan designed to meet the older adult's specific needs. While some older adults prefer to spend a few days a week at the Adult Day Health Center, other older adults receive more services in the home and may visit the center around one day a month. The PACE program also aims to help older adults remain in their communities and in their own homes instead of living in a Skilled Nursing Facility.

- Services Offered Through PACE:
 - Adult Day Health Services
 - Treatment by PACE physicians
 - Home health care and personal care (assistance with Activities of Daily Living [ADLs])
 - Coverage of cost of prescription drugs
 - Specialized medical care (audiology, optometry, podiatry, speech therapy)
 - Respite Services (anything covered in this section, such as Companions, Friendly Visitors, and Adult Day Care)
 - Social services
 - Transportation
 - Hospital and nursing home care when necessary
- Who is Eligible For PACE?
Adults who are over 55 years old, live in a PACE service area, and are certified by the state to be in need of nursing home level care may be eligible for the PACE program. It must be determined that an older adult is able to live safely in the community before they are fully eligible. To inquire about eligibility for nursing-home level care, contact the local Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) that covers the city/town in which the older adult resides.

[Back To Top](#)

- How Do I Pay For PACE?

Older adults who chose to be PACE participants and are eligible for full MassHealth/Medicaid coverage, receive PACE services at no charge. Those who pay a premium for their MassHealth/Medicaid will continue to do so but pay no additional cost for PACE services. Those participants that make more than a particular amount determined by MassHealth/Medicaid may have to spend-down. Spending-down is a method of managing your assets in order to meet eligibility requirements for MassHealth/Medicaid. Please contact MassHealth/Medicaid for more detailed information. A Participant's MassHealth/Medicaid premium will not increase if there is a change in their health. PACE services also accept Medicare. Participants must have both Medicare parts A and B. If a participant decides to use Medicare without additional help from MassHealth/Medicaid, there will be a monthly premium in addition to any existing Medicare costs. Private pay is another option for those who wish to participate in PACE services. Options for private pay include cash and private insurance.

Residential Respite Care

Certain Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs), Rest Homes or Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) may offer residential respite care. If caregivers wish to go on vacation, need to attend an out of state function or business meeting or become ill, the older adult can stay in a residential facility temporarily. These temporary stays are usually not covered by insurance and must be paid for privately. [CLICK HERE](#) to visit our Housing CrossRoad for more information on services offered at different types of residential facilities.

[Back To Top](#)