

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Respite care for high-support adults: finding and training providers

The worker who lasts is the one you train slowly, pay fairly, and trust with a hard week. Here is how to find her, keep her, and stop starting over every six months.

BY JIM PALASTY · 13 MIN READ · RESPITE

1 in 2

UNMET RESPITE

Family caregivers who report needing respite and not receiving it. The number does not include the ones who have stopped asking.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Source



STEP 2

Interview



STEP 3

Onboard slowly

Funding pathways for respite

HCBS waivers	Habilitation Supports, CLS. Limited hours, prior auth.
State respite	Varies wildly. ARCH locator finds yours.
Home Help (MI)	Pays a family member or hired worker.
Voucher programs	Some states, some counties. Ask.
Private pay	Last resort. Highest rate. Fastest access.
LTC insurance	Some policies cover respite. Read carefully.
Grants and mini-grants	The Arc, Autism Society, local nonprofits.
Community respite	Faith community, mutual aid. Often partial.

A STORY WE KNOW

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Alicia found Marisol on the fourth try. The first three lasted two weeks each because Alicia was hiring for the crisis and skipping the onboarding. Marisol got a paid two-hour interview and ten hours shadowing before she was ever alone with Josh. Two years later she is still there. She calls him her guy. Josh calls her by her name. It took thirty hours of Alicia's time to build a relationship that has bought her back a thousand.

ONBOARDING IS A DOWNPAYMENT

What matters, at a glance

Sourcing

Every hire comes through five channels. Agencies. University nursing. Church boards. Existing worker referrals. Respite registries.

Rates

\$20 to \$28 an hour is the 2026 range for high-support work. Below that is why the field is bleeding people.

DSP shortage

Direct Support Professional turnover runs around 45% annually. You are hiring in a workforce collapse, not a labor market. Plan accordingly.

Interview structure

Paid two-hour interview. First hour is talk. Second hour is with your adult, doing something normal. Watch what your adult does.

Trust window

Real trust takes about thirty days of shared time. Do not skip the shadow and pair weeks because the emergency is right now.

Retention

Workers stay because they are respected, paid, and included. Not because of loyalty. Structure the job.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

- | | |
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| ☐ Signed job description | ☐ Emergency contacts and doctor list |
| ☐ Medication administration training documented | ☐ Behavior support plan reviewed with signature |
| ☐ Fire and safety walkthrough | ☐ Communication and AAC training |
| ☐ Back-up worker introduced | ☐ Feedback protocol (weekly first month) |

YOUR MOVE

When you are starting from zero, here is how you build a bench

- 1 Post the job with real pay. Craigslist, agency board, university nursing program, church, respite registry.
- 2 Screen calls in ten minutes. Ask three questions. Anyone who bristles is not the one.
- 3 Paid two-hour interview. Meet your adult in a normal setting. Watch both.
- 4 Ten hours of shadow. Ten of paired. Ten of independent. Adjust as needed.
- 5 Weekly check-in for the first month. Address issues immediately.
- 6 Raise every year on the anniversary. Ask what she needs to stay.

The worker who feels prepared stays. The one who is thrown in leaves.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

archrespite.org/respitelocator · <https://archrespite.org/respitelocator/nadsp.org> · <https://nadsp.org/>

Informational only. Not legal or medical advice. Verify current program rules before acting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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