

Care and Support

Respite care



Some older people and people with disability are only able to remain at home with assistance from a spouse, relative or friend. The person may be dependent on their carer for daily tasks such as shopping, cooking or bathing. The caring role is often extremely demanding. The carer may become housebound and isolated and need a break.

Respite care enables the carer to have a rest, go out, attend to business, or go on a holiday. It also gives the person they care for the opportunity to meet other people. Respite care can be provided on a planned, regular basis for short or long periods of time. In some circumstances, respite can be provided in an emergency.

Eligibility to subsidised services may depend on the age of the person receiving care and their condition.

Community respite care

In-home respite care

Some people may only need a respite care worker to provide minimal assistance in their home while their regular carer has a short break. This may include day respite or overnight respite.

Centre-based, out-of-home day respite

Full or half-day programs may be available in day care centres or other community settings. Meals and transport to the facility may be provided, as well as activities that will assist socialisation.

Respite care may also involve a person being accompanied by a care worker to a community-based activity (e.g. social event or outing).

Overnight respite care – respite cottages

Overnight respite care in 'respite cottages' ranging from 24 hours to a few days is also available in some areas. These are usually adapted houses and aim to provide a home-like environment, catering for just a few clients at a time.

Some day care centres, and most respite cottages are able to provide respite with programs suitable for people with early stages of dementia.

For people aged 65 years and over (50 and over if Indigenous Australians) in-home and community respite care may be available through Australian Government-subsidised services.

Contact **My Aged Care**, tel. **1800 200 422**; www.myagedcare.gov.au.

For younger people with a disability, respite care services may be available through a **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** care plan. To apply to become a participant or to obtain further information, contact the NDIS, tel. **1800 800 110** or visit www.ndis.gov.au.

Respite care in an aged care home

It may be necessary to arrange for a period of respite in a Commonwealth-funded aged care home. The minimum booking period for residential respite is usually two weeks, but some homes may require a longer period.

Eligibility for residential respite is determined by an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). This can be arranged by yourself, a family member or a health professional through a referral to **My Aged Care** tel. **1800 200 422**. If you have an existing residential respite care approval (referral code) you need **not** contact **My Aged Care**.

A total of 63 days respite care is allowed per person in a financial year, and this time does not have to be taken all at once. If you need to check how much residential respite balance you have left, call **Services Australia**, tel. **1800 195 206**. There is the possibility of an additional period of 21 days where the aged care assessor considers extra time is needed.

Once you are approved by the assessor, you may apply directly to the aged care home for respite.

Some aged care homes have respite-dedicated beds that can be booked ahead. Other only offer respite places that can be booked for occupancy in the next few days.

Catalyst Foundation (including Seniors Information Service) maintains a residential aged care vacancy register including respite places available. The vacancy lists are available on its website: www.catalystfoundation.com.au. Alternatively, you can phone us for information on the vacancies listed. **Tel (08) 8168 8776**

Younger people seeking residential respite

A younger person (including NDIS participants) may be assessed to see if they are eligible for respite care in an aged care home. They must have explored all age-appropriate accommodation and supports options, including testing eligibility for NDIS (if appropriate), before they can be assessed. Specific documented evidence is required in these instances.

An exception to this is someone seeking urgent residential respite care, other service providers cannot provide this care, and they are considered at significant risk of harm.

Residential respite fees

In respite you will pay the basic daily fee (85% of the basic rate of the single Age Pension) regardless of whether you are a pensioner or not. This basic daily fee combined with the Government subsidy covers the care and services which must be provided under the *Quality of Care Principles 2014*. Accommodation payment/contribution and means-tested fee do NOT apply to respite residents.

Some aged care homes may charge an extra or additional services fee covering amenities and /or services that go beyond the prescribed care. The extra/additional services fees vary from home to home, and within the same home they may vary according to the client's financial status. Check with the aged care home for details of these extra / additional services and the fees that apply.

Some homes may ask you to pay a booking fee to secure a period of respite care. They cannot charge you more than either a week's fee, or 25% of the fee for the proposed period of respite care (whichever is lower). This is a PREPAYMENT of respite care fees and not an additional payment. Once you enter the service, your provider will deduct this booking fee from your daily fees.

Pension payment for a couple temporarily separated due to respite

Under the social security law "*Respite care couples will be assessed against the single rate of payment applicable, but the assessment will still take into account the combined income and assets as if they were a member of a couple*". This means that if a member of the couple is in respite for at least 14 days in a row they may each receive the single rate of the Age Pension for the period. It is important to obtain evidence from the respite care provider and apply to Services Australia (Centrelink) as soon as possible.

Hardship provisions

If payment of daily care fees for residential aged care respite will cause undue hardship, they can be reduced or waived (excluding extra services fees). You must meet certain eligibility criteria, and each case is assessed on an individual basis.

Once Services Australia (Centrelink) receives your application it will be assessed within 28 days. You will be notified of the decision in writing.

Therefore, if you want to receive approval before entering respite care, lodge an application well in advance of the planned respite care dates.

Services Australia manages all financial hardship applications. You can call them on **1800 227 475** to obtain a copy of the *Aged Care Claim for financial hardship assistance form (SA462)*, to discuss an existing application, or for further information. The form is also available at www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sa462.

Respite in supported residential facilities and serviced apartments/units

Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs) provide accommodation and personal care to people with disabilities. SRFs are regulated by the Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992; they are privately operated. Some SRFs are registered NDIS providers and may cater for NDIS participants only or with priority.

Serviced apartments/units are a type of retirement village residence where certain services, e.g. meals, may be provided. Some also offer respite care.

Approval by an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS) is not required for respite in SRFs and serviced apartments. The time available for respite will be determined by the facility. It is important to ask what support is available and how much it will cost, as there are no set services or fees in SRFs and serviced apartments.

Catalyst Foundation (including Seniors Information Service) maintains an SRFs vacancy register including respite places available. The vacancy list is available on the Foundation's website. Alternatively, you can phone us for information. A list of serviced apartment operators including those providing respite services is also available.

Catalyst Foundation can also assist with exploring other respite care options. **Tel. 8168 8776**, www.catalystfoundation.com.au.

Veterans and War Widow(er)s

For eligible veterans and war widow(er)s holding a Gold or White Repatriation Health Card, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) may pay for up to 28 days (196 hours) of respite care in any one financial year. This can be in-home or residential or a combination of both. Seven hours in-home respite is equivalent to one day in a residential respite facility.

DVA will only pay for genuine respite in a residential aged care home – that is to give a carer a break. DVA will not pay for residential aged care respite for a veteran waiting for permanent placement in a facility. Contact **Veterans' Home Care, tel. 1300 550 450**

Carer Gateway

This is a national initiative supporting people who are looking after someone with a disability, a medical condition, mental illness or who is frail due to age. The Gateway includes online and phone services that provide support, practical information and resources to assist carers, including respite services.

Tel. 1800 422 737 to be connected to your local provider and/or visit www.carergateway.gov.au

Registered carers on a case-by-case, needs basis may receive financial support to pay for support and respite care, including emergency respite.

Care finders support senior Australians who need intensive support who could otherwise fall through the cracks. They will help people to understand and access Australian Government-funded aged care supports and services, including home and community care and residential aged care.

Information and contact details for care finder organisations are available at www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-care-finder

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Contact Us

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