

# Respite Program Handbook



*We're creating a more equitable world so people with developmental disabilities can choose their path. We do this by reimagining how care and support can be better connected to fill gaps in human services across an individual's lifespan.*





# WELCOME

Welcome to the Easterseals Northern California In-Home Respite Program. This handbook is provided to you as a resource, giving you information about your rights and responsibilities while receiving services from us and providing an overview of our program. We believe that the partnership between you and the Easterseals Northern California team is essential to meet the needs of your loved one.

## OUR PURPOSE AND VALUES

At Easterseals Northern California (ESNorCal), we're creating a more equitable world so people with developmental disabilities can choose their path. We do this by reimagining how care and support can be better connected to fill gaps in human services across an individual's lifespan.

Values shape the culture and define the character of Easterseals Northern California. Values guide how we, as an organization, behave and are the standards by which we make decisions. As an organization, our values are:

**BOLD**

**EQUITY-  
INFORMED**

**COMMUNITY-  
CENTERED**

**WELLBEING-  
DRIVEN**

## WHO IS A CAREGIVER?

We use the word "caregiver" for anyone who provides regular parenting and care to someone. For example, a caregiver might be a grandparent, aunt or legal guardian.

## OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We will provide exceptional, individualized, family-centered services to empower children and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and children who are at risk for developmental delays, to achieve their goals and live independent, fulfilling lives. Our services are voluntary and at any time you can refuse, decline or withdraw from them.

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Easterseals Northern California believes that everyone should be treated equally. We provide the same level of care to our participants regardless of their race, gender expression, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or any other factor that makes them uniquely themselves.



**Set aside quiet time to review the handbook.** The information in this handbook is important. Please take time to read all of the information.

### **DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the supervision team. We want to make sure all participants, caregivers and the community in a participant's life understand how Easterseals Northern California can improve the lives of people with disabilities. Contact information can be found at the end of this handbook.

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

**STEP 1:** Review the content of this handbook.

**STEP 2:** Review, sign, date and return the following form(s).

- Consent for In-Home Respite Services

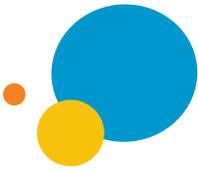
### **IMPORTANT:**

Throughout this handbook, you will see "Tip" sections. Tips offered in the handbook include helpful information and proven caregiver strategies.

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## OVERVIEW

Easterseals Northern California has been serving individuals with disabilities and their families for over 90 years. Throughout our history as a non-profit organization, we have focused on those with disabilities and bringing them high-quality care and services. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been focusing on not only continuing to provide high-quality care but also focusing on how to support the families caring for our valued participants. Families who care for individuals with disabilities often report higher levels of stress than those parenting and caring for typically developing children and individuals. Through our respite program, we support those caregivers by providing a respite service that allows them to take some much-needed time away.

Our respite practitioners support and encourage participants to make personal choices and informed decisions that affect their life through repetition and guidance during respite. Our program is person-centered, and during respite services, we encourage participants to engage in activities that they choose and to take control over their own environment.

The goal of ESNorCal's In-Home Respite Program is to provide in-home non-medical care, while relieving caregivers and allowing them time away from their loved one, while attending to and providing basic self-help and daily activities to their loved ones that would typically be performed by the caregiver.

In summary, our program is designed to allow caregivers of children and adults with disabilities the opportunity to spend time focusing on other important aspects of life and provide a break from full-time caring.

## A PARTICIPANT'S VOICE

Each one of our participants has their own unique voice. Some participants may be unable to say what they want and need directly. Others may communicate through their physical behavior, but not with words. Regardless of the way in which a participant expresses their wants and needs, we believe it is very important to listen to the participant's voice. As a participant receives care, the ESNorCal treatment team will always listen to the participant's voice.

## WHAT DOES RESPITE LOOK LIKE?

Well, it depends! For our caregivers, it can be whatever you want. In its simplest definition, respite is a break from caring for your loved one. You can leave the house, run errands, spend time with your other loved ones, spend time with a significant other or even take a nap!

For the participant during their respite session, we look to you, the caregiver, to guide us in what you would like us to do during the session. We have the option to plan structured activities, or we can take it easy and give your loved one a break. This can look like a movie night with pizza, relaxing on the couch, playing Legos®, doing homework or following the participant's lead on preferred activities. During respite, there isn't an agenda or treatment plan; we are there to take care of the daily needs of your loved one, whatever that may be.

## key terms

### Practitioner/Respite Associate (RA)

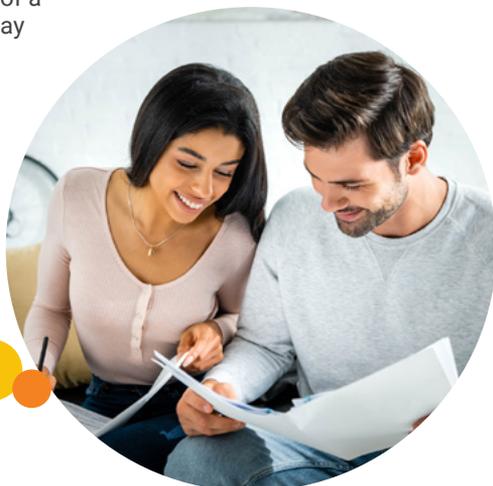
Trained professional focused on providing high-quality respite care. Respite associates (RAs) are practitioners.

### Caregiver

Someone who is authorized to care for and make decisions for a participant or on behalf of a participant. This could be a parent or may also be another person responsible for the participant's decisions, like a grandparent or legal guardian.

### Loved One/Participant

Person referred for and receiving Respite Services.



## INTAKE PROCESS

Our Respite Program is funded by the Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB). If you already receive RCEB services and are interested in our In-Home Respite Program, please contact your RCEB case manager for more information. If you are not currently receiving regional center services and are unsure how to start or if you are eligible, please reach out to your clinical case manager who can help you get in contact.

Once you have received authorization through the RCEB for in-home respite care, please let your regional center case manager know that you wish to receive those services through Easterseals Northern California. Once we receive your authorization for regional center, we will schedule a respite intake call. During this call, we will discuss all aspects of respite care, learn a little more about your family through our respite questionnaire and how we can best support, as well as gather all the information we need to be able to provide you with the best possible respite care. We will also discuss scheduling and available respite times.



## **ENTRANCE CRITERIA**

Participants must meet the following criteria to be admitted into the program:

1. Have an active authorization and referral from the Regional Center of East Bay (RCEB) for in-home respite care.
2. Be bathroom independent. Our program will help with toileting for individuals who require assistance. We will support with diapering for children. However, adolescents and adults need to be toilet independent or only require minimal assistance.
3. Respite practitioners are trained to work with individuals who exhibit some behavior difficulties and those who may require support with basic self-care routines. However, the program is not able to assist people with high-intensity, high-frequency behaviors such as:
  - Physically aggressive behavior
  - Self-injurious behavior
  - Behavior that may be injurious to others
  - Yelling that is disruptive to group activity
4. Although we strive to support and serve all individuals requiring care, the program is not designed to accommodate participants requiring nursing care, participants with special feeding needs (e.g., feeding tubes) or those who require frequent repositioning due to skin breakdown.



## SCHEDULING

- All respite sessions will be scheduled by our program manager.
- We do our best to accommodate your requests for changes or preferences but cannot guarantee any changes.
- You may have one consistent practitioner providing your loved one's respite care or you may have a different practitioner each time. If it is a different practitioner, rest assured, as they will be filled in and have access to the Participant Profile to familiarize themselves with your loved one and home before the session.
- All communication regarding the schedule must go through the program manager. Please do not discuss schedule or schedule changes with your practitioners.
- For any cancellations with less than 48 hours' notice, please call the program manager at 510-910-3333. For other questions or requests, you may call or email.
- Please refer to the sick policy and attendance sections for more specifics regarding your respite schedule.

### COMMUNICATION

We ask that all communication regarding scheduling goes through our program manager. You can reach them by phone or email:

PHONE .....

510-910-3333

EMAIL .....

[respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org](mailto:respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org)

Please do not call, text or email a practitioner directly. The only exception to this is if you need to contact them during the session to check on something or inform them you are running late.

# SICK POLICY

## SICK POLICY

Caregivers must notify the program if the participant shows signs of illness, unless there is documentation provided by a medical provider stating that the participant is well enough to attend program. The participant should be free of symptoms for 24 hours before resuming in-person respite services. In-person respite services should be cancelled if a participant is sent home or stays home from school, child care or has signs of illness without a doctor's note. In-person respite services can be rescheduled for telehealth or take place another day when the participant is symptom-free and no longer contagious.

If anyone else in the family or home is experiencing any signs of illness, we ask that a safe distance be maintained between the individual and ESNorCal staff to prevent transmission of any illness.

If the participant or anyone in the participant's home has a highly contagious disease, such as, but not limited to, COVID-19, Pink Eye, Strep, Impetigo (skin infection), or Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease, in-person respite services must be cancelled. A note from a medical provider may be requested by ESNorCal prior to resuming services.

If anyone in the home has head lice, please let us know and keep the individual home and cancel in-person respite services until it can be treated and nit-free.

## IMPORTANT: SICK POLICY

ESNorCal requires all participants and staff to strictly abide by the terms of the sick policy. Staff and participants should not attend in person if there is a risk of spreading illness and/or infection.





## ATTENDANCE

- Please let us know as soon as you are able about any planned absences or vacations. Our program manager will do their best to schedule make-up sessions when possible.
- Caregivers/homes must inform the program if they need to cancel previously scheduled respite care by calling the program manager at 510-910-3333 or [respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org](mailto:respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org).
- ESNorCal's Respite Program will inform the Regional Center on or before the participant's 3rd day of unplanned (less than 24 hours' notice) absence or cancellation of respite services in a three-month period.
- Caregivers/homes must call and give at least 24 hours' notice for a cancellation. If the caregiver does not notify the program, that day will be documented as an unexcused cancellation. Over five (5) unexcused cancellations in one (1) year or significant cancellations may lead to termination of services.
- In case a caregiver does not return home on time at the conclusion of the scheduled session, we will assess a fee of \$25.00 for the first 15 minutes after 2:30 pm and \$1.00 for every minute thereafter until the caregiver returns home. Late caregiver arrivals require ESNorCal to pay staff for additional hours. In the event that no caregiver or emergency contact is able to be reached within 45 minutes, we will call local law enforcement.





## PRACTITIONER ATTENDANCE

- Practitioners are expected to arrive on time for all respite sessions. If your practitioner is late, please call our program manager at 510-910-3333.
- If a practitioner must cancel a session, we will do our best to schedule an alternate practitioner. In some instances, we may need to change the time of session based on our capacity.
- In cases when a practitioner must call out last minute due to illness, we will do our best to send an alternate practitioner and will let you know before they arrive. In some cases, we may need to cancel the session if a replacement isn't available.

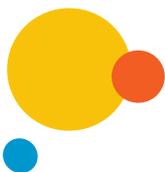
## CAREGIVER NO SHOW/NOT ANSWERING

- If caregivers do not return home at the end of the respite session and we are unable to reach you, we will call the emergency contacts on file and request one of them to come to the home to take responsibility for the participant.
- If caregivers are late more than two times, ESNorCal will evaluate the schedule and make updates as needed.

## HOLIDAYS

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

In addition to the above holidays, the In-Home Respite Program may be closed for up to two business days per year for staff days of engagement, learning and training. Holiday closures are subject to change and will be communicated in advance.



## **SAFETY COMES FIRST**

### **ENSURING THE SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS AND PRACTITIONERS**

We want to ensure the health and safety of all participants and practitioners. To reduce health and safety risks during treatment, it's important to follow all policies, laws and regulations related to health and safety, including our sick policy.

### **SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS**

To help maintain a safe and secure environment for all individuals on our property—children, families, visitors, employees, and caregivers—video surveillance is in use throughout all public areas. No audio is recorded. These cameras help us monitor activity, prevent incidents, and protect both people and property. By entering the premises, you acknowledge and give your implied consent to this safety measure.

### **EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

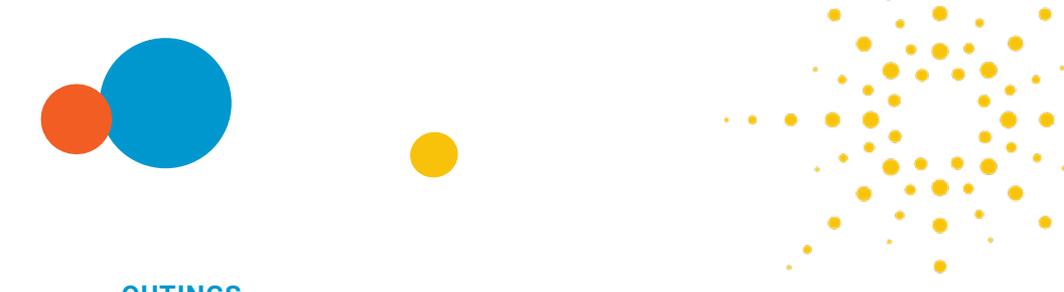
Our practitioners are trained to handle many situations. However, if a situation is escalating, before it becomes emergent, they will call the caregiver for support or to return home if needed. If they feel an emergency has occurred or if the participant begins to exhibit behavior that they cannot address, they will call 911 for help and then call the caregiver when it is safe to do so. In any medical emergency, the practitioner will immediately call 911. If a participant becomes sick or injured, the practitioner will call 911 and have the participant transported to the nearest hospital as advised by first responders.

### **CELL PHONE USAGE**

The Respite Associate (RA) will be using their phone during emergency situations. They may also use their phone during their breaks. RA should not be on any casual phone calls during respite service time.

### **LOCATION OF SERVICES**

- Respite will be scheduled for and must occur at your home address.
- If you have shared custody and your loved one resides in two homes, we will work with you to accommodate this based on capacity and if both homes are located in the service area.



## OUTINGS

- If you have indicated on your Participant Profile that you are comfortable with respite care occurring at a nearby community location like a local park, respite care can include outings.
- With your signed consent, outings can take place within the community, using the respite associate's vehicle, as long as it is within a 10-mile radius from the participant's home. We recommend that the practitioner get to know the participant before leaving the home. We cannot take participants out of the home if there are any safety issues (elopement, bolting, not following instructions, etc.).

## TREATMENT SESSION SETTINGS AND ENVIRONMENT

- We care about the safety of our participants and staff. We reserve the right to evaluate any setting before approving it. We also reserve the right to reevaluate if the location is suitable at any time. The setting can be rejected at the sole discretion of an ESNorCal employee if they feel an environment is unsafe, possesses a health hazard or could subject the participant or staff to any kind of harassment.
- ESNorCal reserves the right to discontinue providing services in a home or community environment. In these cases, a supervisor or manager will directly address the problem with the caregivers who can help resolve the safety issue.

## TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES

- ESNorCal practitioners are responsible for their own transportation. Our practitioners can transport the respite participant in their vehicles to participate in community activities such as shopping at a convenience store or grocery store, bowling alley to bowl, and even to a restaurant where the participant can order and pay for their own meal. A release from liability form must first be completed by the designated guardian before any community access can be approved.

## TERMINATION OF RESPITE

Participants will be eligible to continue in the program until:

- The RCEB team has determined that the participant is no longer appropriate to participate in the In-Home Respite Program.
- The participant moves outside the service area.
- The participant's home is unsafe or unsuitable to continue providing in-home services.
- The participant or caregiver is unable to accept respite services based on their schedule.
- The participant or caregiver requests to discontinue services.
- The participant exhibits high-intensity, high-frequency behaviors that are aggressive or assaultive and the ESNorCal program is no longer the best fit for services.



# YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS:

- To receive services in a manner free from abuse, retaliation, humiliation, neglect, financial exploitation or any other type of exploitation.
- To receive services that are sensitive to age, gender, race, cultural or religious preferences, health status and physical ability.
- To receive information that allows participants and caregivers to make informed consent before starting services.
- To refuse services offered after being notified of the benefits, alternatives and consequences.
- To be an informed participant by receiving information regarding services in a reasonably prompt and confidential manner.
- To have the participant's records protected as required by applicable privacy law at all times, outlined in the Notice of Privacy Practices. Our Notice of Privacy Practices is maintained at all times on our website, [www.esnorcal.org](http://www.esnorcal.org).
- To receive relevant information about individuals providing services as allowed by organizational policies and applicable privacy laws.
- To contact the Catalight Care Services Customer Service Department to file a complaint or grievance without fear of retaliation or barrier to service.

## PARTICIPATION IN LEGAL MATTERS

Sometimes families who come to ESNorCal for services are involved in legal matters such as divorce. While we understand that these situations can be stressful for participants and families, it is important to know that we will remain neutral and not participate in any legal matters or disputes, including those involving participants, unless required by law or court order.

If you need information to be sent to any party involved in a legal matter, please inform your practitioner. They will provide you with a Request for Information form, which you can present to a court official to receive the necessary details.



## MANDATED REPORTING LAWS IN CALIFORNIA

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) requires any ESNorCal practitioner to report any suspected abuse or neglect of any child. This could include a participant's siblings. Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act requires any ESNorCal practitioner to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a dependent adult. A dependent adult is anyone who, because of their physical or mental limitations, cannot care for themselves. This includes some adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).



# GRIEVANCES OR COMPLAINTS

## FILING A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

Participants and caregivers may file a complaint at any time without fear of retaliation. When we receive a complaint, our staff works to remedy the concern and prevent the issue from happening again.

### STEP 1

**Ask to meet with a member of your loved one's supervising team to discuss your concerns.** Usually this is the only step you need to take. We are committed to resolving issues quickly. If you are not satisfied after meeting with a supervisor or manager, please move on to the second step below.

### STEP 2

If the discussion with a supervisor or manager does not resolve the issue, **talk to your Program Manager or a member of ESNorCal's clinical leadership team** by emailing them at [respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org](mailto:respite.referrals@familyofcompanies.org).

### STEP 3

If the issue is not resolved by the clinical leadership team, contact our **Quality Department at [Quality@catalight.org](mailto:Quality@catalight.org) to file a complaint or grievance.** You may also bypass steps 1 and 2 above and file a grievance at any time. Our Quality Department will work with you, your treatment team, and our leadership to resolve the issue in an unbiased and ethical manner.

## CALIFORNIA CONSUMER PRIVACY ACT DISCLOSURE

The California Consumer Privacy Act (“CCPA”) creates privacy rights relating to the collection, sale, disclosure and deletion of consumers’ personal information. The CCPA requires businesses to provide consumers, including job applicants and employees, with information about their rights, including a description of the categories of personal information to be collected and the purpose for which the information will be used. The categories of information we collect and your rights as a California resident can be found on our website.





## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q: Will ESNorCal watch/care for siblings?**

**A:** No. Unless they are also authorized for respite through the regional center, we are only providing care for the participant. If you have other children who will be home during respite hours, you or another adult must provide the care for them. If you wish to leave the home during respite hours and leave another loved one (under the age of 18) in the house, you must provide prior written notice (email is fine) to the supervisor stating that the loved one will be home but they are independent and you acknowledge that ESNorCal is not responsible for their care or safety.

### **Q: Will ESNorCal help with toileting and toilet training?**

**A:** Yes. We will follow the guidelines you provide regarding your loved one's toileting needs. We can support children with diapering, but adolescents and adults must be toilet independent or require minimal assistance.

### **Q: Will ESNorCal provide meals for my loved one?**

**A:** Our practitioners can prepare easy meals (like reheating food, baking frozen pizza, cutting up fruit/veggies, etc.) and snacks for your loved one. Please plan to provide instructions when the practitioner arrives regarding what and when your loved one should eat, and leave instructions for anything requiring cooking.

### **Q: Will ESNorCal staff eat food from my home?**

**A:** No. Our practitioners cannot accept food from families. However, if the respite session is scheduled during a mealtime, they may bring their own food to eat alongside the participant. We do this to provide a family feel during respite. We want the participant to feel comfortable, safe and included in daily activities. If you prefer they do not eat together or if you have food restrictions for your home (i.e., you have a gluten-free kitchen), please let us know during your intake and we can discuss and create a plan to accommodate.





**Q: Will ESNorCal help with homework?**

**A:** Yes. Our practitioners are not trained tutors, so if they are unsure of a subject, they may not be able to lend assistance. But they can help guide the participant to the best of their abilities.

**Q: Will ESNorCal help bathe my loved one?**

**A:** Yes. Our practitioners can help with bathing needs for participants who require support.

**Q: Can my loved one swim during respite?**

**A:** Swimming can be allowed only when the lessons are conducted by a certified lifeguard or swim instructor.

**Q: Can you take my loved one to the park or out of the house during respite?**

**A:** Yes, however it is at the discretion of the practitioner, and we recommend that the practitioner get to know the participant before leaving the home. We cannot take participants out of the home if there are any safety issues (elopement, bolting, not following instructions, etc.). We will discuss this during your intake in more detail. See Transportation Guidelines for more information.







[esnorcal.org](http://esnorcal.org)



**CORPORATE OFFICE**  
2730 Shadelands Drive  
Building 10  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598  
(925) 266-8400

**CORPORATE HOURS**

M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm

Respite hours may vary

**RESPITE SERVICE AREAS**

Contra Costa County

Alameda County

*Easterseals Northern  
California has been  
awarded the highest level  
of accreditation by CARF  
International for its Respite  
Program.*

