

## RESPIRE TIP



### I DON'T QUALIFY FOR DIRECT FAMILY SUPPORT ~ WHAT DO I DO NOW?

So you have gone through Nova Scotia Community Services' application and assessment process for Direct Family Support (DFS) and were told that your family did not qualify for the program. What should you do now? Here are some suggestions that you might try.

#### **1. Appeal the decision**

If you do not qualify for the DFS program and you feel your family should receive the funding, you can appeal the decision. The person who did your assessment can tell you the steps to take for an appeal. If you are appealing a decision, it may be because you think your family life is becoming more challenging due to the support needs of your family member with high needs. These challenges may not have been clear to the DFS staff that made the decision to disqualify your family. You will need to provide a fuller picture of your family situation so DFS can better understand what your daily life is like. You may want to describe a typical day or week to show the challenges your family faces. You may want to ask someone outside of your family (e.g. doctor or teacher) to describe your child's challenges.

It is important to remember that an appeal does not guarantee that you will qualify for the program. Even after an appeal, your family may not meet the criteria and you will be looking for other options for respite. However, if you find yourself in an emergency situation, don't hesitate to contact Community Services again. It is always possible to reapply if your situation changes.

#### **2. Other Respite options**

Respite options fall into two broad categories – Formal Respite and Informal Respite. The difference between these is primarily cost-related. Formal Respite involves dollars to pay a worker, or to pay for a program your family member can take part in. Informal Respite is unpaid respite. It is whatever support you can put in place to give yourself a few moments of breathing space. This can include anything from having a half-hour in front of the TV to enjoy a favourite

show, to walking, reading, going for coffee, listening to music, going to the gym, or chatting on the phone with family or friends.

### **3. Informal Support - Who can I ask to help?**

#### **The Inner Circle**

You may get informal support by finding someone who can take on your caregiving responsibilities for 30 minutes or an hour so you can have some time to do whatever you wish. You could ask a family member or a friend to give you this break. Perhaps a neighbour might be interested in helping out, or someone through your local community organization. Advertise in a local church bulletin, or on your library's notice board. Don't be afraid to ask – there may be people around you who have the interest or skills you need and are willing to help.

It is better to be specific when asking someone to help you. Take some time to map out your daily tasks. What kind of time do you need for respite? Is it one hour for a walk, or do you want three hours for a date night with your spouse or partner? Look at your daily schedule and be sure to slot in respite – then start asking for help.

#### **Creative Ideas**

Some families have organized cooperatives for respite. Find some other families who are looking for respite options, and talk about the possibility of sharing your caregiving. This may be a way for you to have an afternoon or an evening out while your family member is cared for by another family (or families), and you can offer the other families a chance for an evening out the next time.

#### **Community Resources**

Don't forget about community resources. Some communities have family programs where the family members attend together. The program may offer a time for parents to chat or hear a speaker, while the children (with disabilities or without) enjoy a different activity. Ask your local library, community centre, YMCA, or family resource centre if they are know of any programs. You can also ask your social worker, Early Interventionist, or school staff – they may also have connections to family programs in your community.

You can contact your regional respite coordinator to get ideas about resources in your community. The contact information can be found at: <http://disability.novascotia.ca/content/respite-and-caregiver-resources>. Central region (HRM) doesn't currently have a respite coordinator but contacting organizations like The Club (SCRI Society) at: <http://theclubscri.com/> or the Halifax Association for Community Living at: <http://www.halifaxacl.com/> can provide ample information about local programming.

## Students

Think about recruiting a student to help you. Many college or university students are looking for practical experience and might be interested in volunteering with your family. The Nova Scotia Community College's Human Services Program has a Community Disability Supports certificate, for instance, and university programs like child studies, occupational therapy, and recreation therapy are all great sources of potential student volunteers. Speak to a professor or instructor and ask if they would allow a student's volunteer work experience with your family to count as credit towards the student's course work. Talk to the guidance counsellor at your local high school – there may be students there looking for some volunteer experience who would be willing to work with your family.

## Support Groups

Call your local support group. Sometimes the best ideas can come from other families who have faced the same issues. Here are some ways to locate support groups in your community:

- **The Special Needs Information Service (SNIS)** website <http://www.nsnet.org/directory.html> can connect you with many provincial and local support organizations that would be very happy to help you.
- **The Self Help Connection** has a directory which lists provincial support groups. Go to: <http://selfhelpconnection.ca/> or call 902-466-2011 or toll-free at 1-866-765-6639.
- **Nova Scotia 211** can connect you with many provincial and local support organizations that would be very happy to help. Go to: <http://www.ns.211.ca/> or simply dial 2-1-1 on your phone.
- **Caregivers Nova Scotia** provides opportunities for caregivers to connect with other caregivers through its peer support groups. Go to: <http://caregiversns.org/how-we-help/peer-groups> to find out more or call toll-free 1.877.488.7390 for more information.

## 4. Formal Support

If you prefer to have formal supports, you will need to find other sources of funding or formal respite options. Here are a few alternatives to consider:

**Private health insurance:** If you have a private health insurance plan, check to see if it covers any amount of respite care.

**Continuing Care:** Continuing Care Nova Scotia (Nova Scotia Dept of Health and Wellness) helps caregivers by providing access to respite beds for their loved ones in licensed long-term care facilities (nursing homes) across the province. There is also an option available for children. For more information, go to: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs/respice-care.asp> or call 1-800-225-7225.

**Charitable Organizations:** There are programs which can provide families with additional funding for different family needs. Talk to a social worker – they can help you find the programs and help you in applying for available funds. For example:

- President's Choice Children's Charities:  
[http://www.presidentschoice.ca/en\\_CA/community/pccc/apply-for-funding.html](http://www.presidentschoice.ca/en_CA/community/pccc/apply-for-funding.html).
- Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Rec Kids:  
[www.halifax.ca/rec/documents/RecApplication.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/rec/documents/RecApplication.pdf)

### **Recreation Programs**

Have some funding but no worker to hire? Consider a recreation program for your family member with high needs. Most public recreation programs have an inclusion policy and funding dedicated to including the special needs community. Make an appointment with the Program Manager at your local Recreation Program and ask about:

- The inclusion policy – does the program accept people with special needs? If not, how can you work with the program to change that?
- Program accessibility – what is the physical access? What is the staff's capacity to support your family member's needs?
- Does the program have funds set aside to hire extra support staff for people with special needs? What kind of qualifications does the program require for support staff?

The IWK Health Centre has a **Recreation Therapy Department**. They are an excellent resource for accessible and inclusive recreation programs around the province. For more information check their website: <http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/childrens-health/services/#/childrens-health/services/recreation-therapy>.

Lastly, please visit the Respite Partnership's website for other information and resources, such as our **Nova Scotia Respite Guides** which can be found at:  
<http://disability.novascotia.ca/content/respice-partnership-publications>

*This Respite Tip has been brought to you by the Nova Scotia Partnership on Respite, Family Health, and Well-Being. Information on the Respite Partnership and this and other Respite Tips can be found at: <http://disability.novascotia.ca/content/nova-scotia-respite-partnership>*

*Respite, WE deserve it!*



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