



CHAP

COMMUNITY HELPERS
FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Information Package

Respiteservices.com/Toronto
Hosted by Geneva Centre for Autism
112 Merton St. Toronto ON
M4S 2Z8

T: (416) 322- 6317 ext. 1
E: info@respiteservices.com
F: (416) 481 - 1512

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3
INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDER DATABASE	3
WHO ARE INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDERS	3
ENGAGING AN INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDER	4
IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE RESPITE PROVIDER DATABASE	5
LOGIN AND UPDATING	6
<u>CONNECTING WITH INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDERS</u>	7
GENERAL PROCESS	7
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES</u>	8
STEP ONE- WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?	8
STEP TWO- QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN AN INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDER	8
STEP THREE- WOULD THEY BE CONSIDERED AN EMPLOYEE	9
<u>READY TO ENGAGE WITH AN INDEPENDENT RESPITE PROVIDER</u>	10
STEP FOUR- REVIEW RESPITE PROVIDER PROFILES	10
STEP FIVE- INITIAL CONTACT	10
STEP SIX – CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW	11
STEP SEVEN – REFERENCES AND BACKGROUND SCREENING	13
STEP EIGHT- CHARACTERIZING YOUR RELATIONSHIP	14
STEP NINE- DEVELOPING A CONTRACT	16
STEP TEN- ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION	19
STEP ELEVEN- IMPORTANT TIPS	19
<u>PREPARING AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR</u>	20



Introduction to CHAP Program

Independent Respite Provider Database

The respiteservices.com/supportyourway.ca website is a free online information service that local organizations throughout Ontario support for the benefit of people with disabilities, their families and individual service providers in the community. The website includes a database through which people with disabilities and/or their families can make their support needs known, and through which Independent Respite Providers can offer their services.

The Independent Respite Provider Database is updated regularly as new Independent Respite Providers join the Independent Respite Provider Database and successful matches are made.

respiteservices.com/supportyourway.ca and the local organizations that support this program are together called “respiteservices.com/supportyourway.ca”.



Independent Respite Providers

Independent Respite Providers vary in experience, skill sets, and availability, and should not be considered trained therapists, who are available for part-time parent/caregiver relief, to provide support in the family home or in the community. This may include one-to-one support in the community and assisting families to implement recommendations made by a qualified therapist (e.g. Speech Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist).

The Independent Respite Provider Database does not guarantee or warrant that any specific Independent Respite Provider is appropriate for any particular individual. The Independent Respite Provider Database doesn't supervise, control, or otherwise have any involvement with the services that an Independent Respite Provider provides or the relationship between a provider and a family (database user).



Your obligations and an Independent Respite Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Independent Respite Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Independent Respite Provider does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Independent Respite Provider.

Engaging an Independent Respite Provider

In order to be placed in the Independent Respite Provider Database, Independent Respite Providers must submit:

- a profile outlining their experience, interests and availability
- a resume

All of which is reviewed during a personal interview by CHAP Program Coordinators.

Each Independent Respite Provider:

- has a Police Reference Check (Vulnerable Sector Screening) conducted
- 2 references checked (for major disqualifying features only) and
- has attended an orientation session to the Independent Respite Provider Database.



It is however up to each family to personally screen the Independent Respite Provider they are considering, to verify their current documentation and references, and to select and contract with an Independent Respite Provider of their choosing based on their own independent assessment of whether the person is trustworthy and appropriate.

Independent Respite Providers are not employees of *respiteservices.com* or the Independent Respite Provider Database. Individuals accessing the Independent Respite Provider Database contact and engage with Independent Respite Providers directly, either as self-employed independent contractors or as employees. The Respite Provider Database is an information service only and does not have any involvement in any direct support relationships that may result from the information provided through the Independent Respite Provider Database.

There is no charge for the use of the Independent Respite Provider Database. We cannot guarantee that we can always make an appropriate connection between an Independent Respite Provider and a family/individual needing support.

Important Notes about the Independent Respite Provider Database

1. The Independent Respite Provider Database does not represent or warrant that any Independent Respite Provider is suitable for any particular family's needs or at all, or that any information included in an Independent Respite Provider's profile is accurate or current. When engaging with an Independent Respite Provider, each family should perform their own screening, obtaining, reviewing, and confirming up-to-date background checks and references.
2. It is the responsibility of the family who wishes to engage an Independent Respite Provider to call, interview, engage, pay and supervise the Independent Respite Provider, consistent with the family's needs. The Independent Respite Provider Database does not provide supervision for the Independent Respite Provider or in any way control how, when, where, or what services will be provided.
3. Independent Respite Providers are not Independent Respite Provider Database employees. Payment to an Independent Respite Provider is made directly by the family that engages them. The Independent Respite Provider Database will not assume any responsibility for disagreements over fees/payments/services provided. Any problems in this regard must be resolved between the Independent Respite Provider and the family.
4. Some requests are difficult to fill due to the travel time or type of hours requested. The Program coordinators add Independent Respite Providers to the Independent Respite Provider Database throughout the year. Program coordinators will endeavour to make your information known to Independent Respite Provider's profile that is consistent with your needs as soon one is available. Families are strongly encouraged to recruit Independent Respite Providers from their own community.

Login

To access the Independent Respite Provider Database, visit www.respiteservices.com/toronto.

Username: _____

Password: _____

Click on **Login** on the top right hand corner of the website to enter the Independent Respite Provider Database.

Click on **forgot your username or password?** to reset the username or password.

Login information is case sensitive and works best if the username and password are typed directly into the spaces provided.

Updating Online Consent

Signing consent online or initiating a search for an Independent Respite Provider can be completed by following the steps below on the Independent Respite Provider Database.

1. After logging in, click on **“Manage Family Profile”** on the left-hand side of the website.

While updating the profile, click on a question near the bottom that states: **“Type of Respite Support Requested”**.

2. Beside **“Type of Respite Support Requested”**, it currently lists **Unsure**. Use the drop down menu to change that answer to **Both** (as outlined below). Click **“Next”** at the bottom.

3. Update the **“Worker Requirements”** section fully to request a search for an Independent Respite Provider (Please note: a CHAP Program Coordinator may follow-up by phone if additional information is required).
4. Follow the prompts and fill out additional consent sections.
5. Be sure to save your profile before you log out.

Your obligations and an Independent Respite Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Independent Respite Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Independent Respite Provider does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Independent Respite Provider.

General Process for Connecting with an Independent Respite Provider

The general process for engaging an Independent Respite Provider is as follows:

1. The family (database user) registers their need for support with the Independent Respite Provider Database and they are entered into the Independent Respite Provider Database.
2. CHAP Program coordinators review the database of Independent Respite Providers to see if there are any Providers immediately available whose profiles meet the needs identified by the family (database user).
3. At the same time the family (database user) is encouraged to review the Independent Respite Provider Classifieds Ads on www.respiteservices.com / www.supportyourway.ca at <https://www.respiteservices.com/Toronto/respiteservices/independentrespiteproviderads> .
4. If the CHAP Program coordinator identifies Independent Respite Providers who might fit the families needs, the CHAP Program coordinator will contact the family (database user) and provide them with the profiles of those available Independent Respite Providers.
5. It is then up to the family (database user) to contact any Independent Respite Providers who appear to be suitable to determine whether they are a fit, and to make further enquiries to confirm that they wish to engage the Independent Respite Provider.
6. The family (database user) and their chosen Independent Respite Provider then negotiate the terms on which service will be provided, whether on an independent contractor or employment basis, the rate/fees, schedule and all other terms of their relationship.
7. The family (database user) and the Independent Respite Provider are then asked to notify the CHAP Program coordinator as to their updated needs or availability so that the database remains current for the benefit of all users and providers.

Please keep in mind:

- The Independent Respite Provider Database is updated throughout the year, but no guarantees are made as to the accuracy or currency of the database, or the availability of a suitable Independent Respite Provider.
- If you are using the Independent Respite Provider Database, the Independent Respite Provider search usually takes 5 business days to complete.
- There may be a longer wait when a special request is made or Independent Respite Providers are not available in your area, during the times you require support.
- In some cases, an Independent Respite Provider may be identified more quickly where Independent Respite Providers with flexible hours exist in your region.
- Please note there is no guarantee that an appropriate Independent Respite Provider is available on short notice, or at all.

Recommendations for Families

Step One: What are your needs?

Identifying your needs is probably the most important thing you have to do to achieve a good fit between you and your Independent Respite Provider. Start by asking yourself some questions and recording your answers. Here are some examples:

- What do I need/want the Independent Respite Provider to do with my son/daughter?
- Will they be administering medication?
- Do I want a non-smoker?
- Do I need an Independent Respite Provider with a driver's license?
- Must the Independent Respite Provider have their own vehicle?
- Do I need an Independent Respite Provider who can swim?
- Do I want specific qualifications in my Independent Respite Provider?
- Do I or my loved one who will be receiving support have any other personal preference or needs when it comes to the attributes of the Independent Respite Provider?
- Will I require the Independent Respite Provider to have first aid and/or CPR, or any other certification or training?



Timelines for camp:

March Break: begin your search in late January

Summer Break: begin your search in late May

Winter Break: begin your search in late October

Step Two: What are the qualities you are looking for in an Independent Respite Provider?

- Knowledgeable, warm, caring
- Willing to learn
- Problem solver, good judgement
- Able to take direction
- Positive outlook, energetic
- Dependable, punctual
- Flexible, accessible and responsive to family's needs
- Good rapport with the person receiving support and family

Your obligations and an Independent Respite Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Independent Respite Provider's status. The information provided here is not legal advice and the Independent Respite Provider does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Independent Respite Provider.

Step Three: Based on your plans for the Independent Respite Provider, would they be considered to be an employee?

Before making plans to engage an Independent Respite Provider we recommend that you consider what the nature of the relationship between you and the Provider will be.

Consider the following issues:

- Do you plan to control the schedule, the location, the type of activities performed?
- Will the Independent Respite Provider dictate the schedule, or be able to flexibly schedule the times that support will be provided around their other clients, employment etc.?
- Do you plan to supervise the Independent Respite Provider or will the services be provided independently?
- Do you need a large number of hours of support per week such that Independent Respite Provider will come to rely on or be dependent on their earnings from you for their livelihood?
- Will the Independent Respite Provider be expected to provide any resources when providing the supports?

All of these factors and more may play into the appropriate legal characterization of the Provider, which may impact your legal obligations when it comes to how the Provider is paid etc. We recommend you give some thought to this before you select a worker, as well as consider your budget to determine how many hours of support you can afford.

You can learn more about how an Independent Respite Provider might be characterized by visiting the following websites:

- Government of Canada - [Employee or Self-Employed Guide](#)
 - Government of Canada - [Determining the Employee/Employer Relationship](#)
 - Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services - [Hiring a Support Worker Guide](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Labour - [Fact Sheet – Difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor](#)

Step Four: Review Independent Respite Provider Profiles

- Review profiles and select those Independent Respite Providers that you would like to consider engaging with.
- Make a list of these individuals leaving space to write down information about each that you will obtain from them when you contact them.

Step Five: Initial telephone/email contact and scheduling interviews

We recommend that you contact the Independent Respite Providers whose profiles have been provided to you by the CHAP Program coordinator within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the profiles. Independent Respite Providers availability changes quickly as families and Independent Respite Providers make connections so you may be disappointed if you wait.

When you call a prospective Independent Respite Provider, we recommend that you tell them your name, and that you got their name through the Independent Respite Provider Database.

Explain when you need an Independent Respite Provider (days and times), what you would like the Independent Respite Provider to do, the needs of your loved one with a disability and where the activities will take place.

If the Independent Respite Provider is interested, then set a date and time when you can meet with them for an interview. It is important that you choose a time when the person who will be receiving supports can be present during the interview so provider can meet and interact with them.



Step Six: Conducting an Interview

Now that you have identified your needs and have written them down, and scheduled an interview you are ready to meet the Independent Respite Provider. The interview is where you talk about these needs with a potential Independent Respite Provider:

- Schedule a time that is convenient for both yourself and the potential Independent Respite Provider.
- Plan about an hour for each interview. Don't be in a hurry.
- Take the time to check references and ask for verification of professional expertise.
- Be prepared – have your questions ready, the profile of the person receiving supports handy, your expectations highlighted, and the person receiving supports present for part, if not all of the interview.
- Be specific about your needs and how you expect the respite time to be spent with the person receiving supports, or the discretion that the provider will have in determining how, what, when and where services will be provided.
- Be sure to discuss fees and payment expectations, how it payment be processed. Once again this relates to whether the Independent Respite Provider will be your employee or is a self-employed contractor.



Example interview questions for potential Independent Respite Providers:

- Please tell me about yourself.
- Please expand on your experience working with children/adolescents/adults.
- Why are you interested in providing respite care services?
- Describe your strengths and areas you are working on.
- What other clients or jobs do you have?
- Why are you the right person to support my loved one?
- What would you do if we disagreed on something?
- If my son/daughter cries when I leave, how will you handle the situation?
- If my son/daughter has to be taken to the hospital for an emergency, what steps would you take?
- What would you do if my son/daughter did not respond to your request?
- What hours are you able to work? During the day, weekend, holidays, short notice? Are there specific times when you are unable to work?
- Are you willing to take my son/daughter out for activities?
- Describe a difficult problem you have had to handle with an individual. How did you handle it?
- Do you have any special training or experience you would like me to be aware of?
- Do you have a valid driver's license? Would you take my son/daughter in your own vehicle? Would you drive our vehicle?
- Do you have 3rd party liability insurance on your vehicle?

Areas of Caution for Interview Questions

There are certain questions when looking for an Independent Respite Provider that are not appropriate to ask Independent Respite Providers. Although families are subject to some exemptions under the Human Rights Code when it comes to engaging a person to provide personal care supports, it's still a good idea to avoid the types of questions that could give rise to a perception that you are asking discriminatory or overly intrusive questions.



Inquiry area	Questions to Avoid	Questions that are Acceptable
National Origin/ Citizenship	-Are you a Canadian citizen? - Where were you born? -What is your “native tongue”?	- Are you authorized to work in Canada? -What languages are spoken fluently (related to job performance)
Age	-How old are you? -When did you graduate? -What's your birth date?	-Are you over age 18?
Marital/ Family Status	-What's your marital status? -Whom do you live with? -Do you plan to have a family? -How many kids do you have?	- Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job?
Race/ Colour	-What is your race?	N/A
Religion	-What is your religious affiliation?	N/A

Step Seven: Checking References and Background Screenings

The Independent Respite Provider Database does check references; however, it is recommended that you check references for yourself as only you can determine whether you trust the references provided and determine whether an Independent Respite Provider is the right fit for you. References can be either personal or work related.

Personal References may include an adult friend, religious leader, a teacher or professor, or a neighbour.

Professional References may include a past or current employer/supervisor or a family that the provider has supported in the past.

Here are a few suggestions for questions you can ask a reference:

- What is your relationship with the provider?
- How long have you known this person?
- I'm looking for someone to provide XXXX type of supports, would you have any concerns about the person's ability to perform such duties?
- Does the provider follow directions?
- Is the provider reliable? Punctual? Honest?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

It is a good idea to review each candidate's background Vulnerable Sector Screening. As a condition of being included in the Independent Respite Provider Database, each Independent Respite Provider must provide a Vulnerable Sector Screen to the Independent Respite Provider Database. We recommend that you review these and ensure that you are comfortable with the results of the screening and that you feel you can trust your Independent Respite Provider to work alone with your loved one.

Step Eight: Characterizing your relationship with a Provider

Is the Independent Respite Provider Self-Employed or Your Employee?

You obligations and an Independent Respite Provider's rights depend on their status as a self-employed contractor or employee. There are a number of resources available on the web that will help you determine an Independent Respite Provider's status (see STEP 3 or below). The information provided here is not legal advice and the Independent Respite Provider Database does not warrant that any information provided is up to date or accurate. It is expressly recommended that you seek legal advice (or at the very least seek further legal information) before entering into a service relationship with an Independent Respite Provider.

Many families choose to engage with their Independent Respite Provider as a casual contractor regardless of the legal requirements. Before making any decisions we recommend you find out more by visiting the following websites:

- Government of Canada - [Employee or Self-Employed Guide](#)
- Government of Canada - [Determining the Employee/Employer Relationship](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services - [Hiring a Support Worker Guide](#)
- Ontario Ministry of Labour - [Fact Sheet – Difference between an Employee and an Independent Contractor](#)

It's important that you carefully consider the characterization of your relationship with any Independent Respite Provider because there can be costly consequences for mischaracterizing your worker if they are injured, file a claim, or are audited.

Obligations based on Employee Status

If you intend the Independent Respite Provider to provide regular service to you on an ongoing basis in your own home, under your control and supervision, at times and locations dictated by you, and/or to the exclusion of other work other families, clients or employers, then the Independent Respite Provider could be considered an employee.

It's important to note that an Independent Respite Provider could still be considered an employee even if they use their own vehicle, have signed an agreement saying they are an independent contractor, or they invoice you.

Employees have a number of entitlements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, such as vacation pay, public holiday pay, and termination pay, among other things. There are also reporting obligations for employees to the CRA (ex. T4s, EI and CPP contributions, Income Tax deductions) and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) related obligations.

Consider visiting the Ontario Ministry of Labour for further information about obligations under the Employment Standards Act, 2000:

- [What Businesses Need to Know](#) (applies to families who are employers)
- [Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act](#)
- [ESA Online Compliance Tools](#)

You can also visit the Government of Canada website for more information about employment related deductions, remittances and reporting obligations:

- [Recruiting and Hiring Workers in Canada](#)
- [T-4 Information for Employers](#)
- [Payroll Deductions Online Calculator Tool](#)

Obligations based on Self-employed Independent Respite Provider Status

If the Independent Respite Provider will provide service to you intermittently, at times that the Independent Respite Provider dictates, with little or no supervision, at locations and in such a manner as the Independent Respite Provider dictates, or in the Independent Respite Provider's home, and the Independent Respite Provider is not dependent on you for their livelihood, then it may be that the Independent Respite Provider would be considered an "independent contractor" or self-employed worker.

An independent contractor is responsible for declaring their own income to Revenue Canada and making their own remittances.

They also do not have the same rights under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* that an employee would.

Technically speaking however, a person who pays a self-employed person is required to file a T4A with Revenue Canada. Learn more about that here:

- [T-4A Information for Payers](#)

Step Nine: Developing a contract

Once you choose an Independent Respite Provider, develop a contract for services with them. Discuss clearly your expectations and be specific about their employment relationship with them. **You are encouraged to have a written contract with them.** It is important to establish and to maintain a good working relationship. Listed are some issues identified by both Independent Respite Providers and families as important things to remember and to discuss.

a. The Schedule



Work with the Independent Respite Provider to determine what the schedule will look like. If the Independent Respite Provider is a self-employed person, this will generally be at times that the Independent Respite Provider dictates they are available and that also work for your loved one.

Confirm with the Independent Respite Provider the day, time period, the types of activities and who has control over these issues (keeping in mind the status you have determined above).

Keep in touch – both parties should provide advance notice of any change in the schedule, health status, and any other important information for care. Note that if your provider is an employee, there are new requirements that will come into effect on January 1, 2019 related to minimum advance notice of cancellation (48 hours) and cancellation pay where notice isn't provided (3 hours' wages).

b. Rate and Manner of Payment



The rate of pay should be established at the interview or when you enter into a contract with a provider, as should how you will pay (cheque or cash) and when you will pay (weekly, monthly, etc.).

Typically, a self-employed provider will dictate the rate, whereas an employee will be more likely to be subject to the rate set by you. Self-employed providers should also be invoicing you on an invoice they prepare.

Employees on the other hand are typically subject to the rates you are prepared to offer and it will typically be your responsibility to keep a record of their hours of work.

You may also need to consider varying rates – for example, one rate for community integration supports and another rate for while your loved one with a disability is sleeping and not in need of direct support. Keep in mind that generally speaking an employee is entitled to be paid the minimum wage, even during periods of sleep except in special circumstances (such as where the employee lives in during their period of employment and could be a “residential support worker”).

c. Trial period



There may be times when you don't get a good fit when hiring an Independent Respite Provider, whether it is from their perspective or yours. Establish a trial period for your contractor or probationary period for an employee before any long-term commitment is made by either party, if you are unsure about the relationship.

d. Transporting Individuals



You may request that an Independent Respite Provider drive your loved one with a disability and use their own vehicle. If an Independent Respite Provider agrees to transport, ensure the Independent Respite Provider has:

- A valid driver's license
- Safe vehicle
- Minimum of \$2,000,000 liability on their insurance (you may wish to speak to your insurance company for requirements and consider taking out a rider on your own policy for this purpose)
- Has notified their insurer that they are driving for the purposes of employment or self-employment.

A family may choose to cover the cost of transportation during the time the Independent Respite Provider is with their loved one with a disability, though that generally looks more like an employment related benefit as opposed to what would be typical in an independent contractor relationship.

The Independent Respite Provider should be responsible to ensure all passengers are safe, proper seat belts and car seats are being used. It is good practise to keep a First Aid Kit in the car. A phone or change for the pay phone for emergencies is also helpful. You may wish to discuss this with the provider.

e. Length of Agreement between Family and Independent Respite Provider



It is hoped that once an agreement has been made for direct support that the commitment of the Independent Respite Provider to you will lead to an ongoing, productive and satisfying relationship.

A long-term relationship means the family can avoid having to seek out and engage a new Independent Respite Provider.

If an Independent Respite Provider decides to leave or the family no longer needs the Independent Respite Provider's support, it is important to give each other notice (notice obligations depend on the status of the Independent Respite Provider, the terms of any contract you sign and the requirements under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* if applicable).

Note that if your Provider is an employee, it is important to address termination specifically in your contract and limit termination entitlements to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* minimum only, expressly excluding any common law reasonable notice or pay in lieu thereof in order to avoid having to pay out large sums related to "reasonable notice" or "severance" that may otherwise be payable.

f. Confidentiality



It is important that you maintain confidentiality with your Independent Respite Provider and that your Independent Respite Provider maintains confidentiality with you and your family. It's a good idea for there to be a clear understanding between the Independent Respite Provider and the family that all personal information must not be discussed unless the person is present or has given their consent to specific information being discussed.

g. Sample Contracts



Ideally, a contract is in writing between you and any Independent Respite Provider. What will be included in the contract depends on the status of your worker. We have highlighted the issues that ought to be addressed in your agreement above in sections a-f. There are many resources available online for templates. Respiteservices.com expressly recommends that you get advice before entering into a legal contract with an Independent Respite Provider and does not express any opinion on the enforceability or validity of any templates linked below.

- **Employment Agreements:**
 - There are numerous templates and resources available online including an employment agreement template that is available from the www.hrcouncil.ca website (click here: **Employment Agreement Template**).
- **Independent Contractor Agreements**
 - There are also numerous resources available online for independent contractor agreements. For example:
 - MaRS Discovery District - <https://www.marsdd.com/mars-library/independent-contractor-agreement-sample-template/>

Step Ten: Onboarding and Information

The Independent Respite Provider attends an orientation/information session before they become active on the Independent Respite Provider Database. However, this is a very general session about the Independent Respite Provider Database and not related to providing service to families, or the specific needs and expectations you may have for supports for your loved one. It is a good idea for every family to provide the Independent Respite Provider they have engaged with information related to:

- Your loved one's needs and any health concerns, medications, allergies they may have
- The location where supports will be provided (if controlled by you)
- A list of key contacts (local hospital, parents, doctors or other supports)
- Any emergency support plans that you have prepared for your loved one
- Any person centre plan (ISPs) your loved one might have
- Lists of likes and dislikes and any recommendations you may have as to how to avoid or respond to distress

For further information in this regard see the section on 'Preparing an Independent Respite Provider' to support your loved one below.

Step Eleven: Tips for maintaining a good working relationship

Identify and discuss problems as soon as they arise. Be prepared to negotiate a solution to the problem:

- Keep communication open and on-going. You may want to maintain a communication book to keep everyone informed and be responsive to any suggestions or recommendations documented.
- Discuss specific strengths and needs of your son/daughter and any strategies used to support him/her with communication, behaviour or in various situations in the community or at home
- If serious problems arise document dates, times, issues and concerns.
- If possible for quality programming, invite the Independent Respite Provider to accompany you to a therapy session to observe the therapist at work with your son/daughter. In this environment, the Independent Respite Provider can ask the therapist questions and observe and implement the program under the watchful eyes of an expert. This also allows you to observe the Independent Respite Provider in action with your son/daughter. Keep in mind that the more training that is provided, however, the more likely the provider will be an employee and not an independent contractor.
- Discuss activities, any costs associated with activities and travel expenses with the Independent Respite Provider. Many places in the community offer discounts, on entrance fees and activities, to support Independent Respite Providers or individuals with a disability.
- Train Independent Respite Providers on proper use of any communication aids, assistive devices or equipment.
- Unless you agree otherwise, only the person engaged and approved by you should provide care to the individual. Generally, if an Independent Respite Provider is not able

to fulfil hours a family would be responsible to make other arrangement. Keep in mind that allowing or requiring that the Independent Respite Provider to arrange alternative supports will help to prove that the provider is an independent contractor.

Preparing an Independent Respite Provider to support your loved one with a disability

1. Think about what makes your loved one with a disability and your family unique

Take some time to think about your loved one and your family and what their special characteristics are. This will help you to talk about your loved one and develop a plan of support for them. It will also help you to think about what is most important for your loved one and for your family. It's sometimes difficult to do this, but the more specific you can be the more likely you will be to find someone who is a good match for your family. Most families will have to recruit, select and train a number of support providers over the years, so taking time to think about these things and make notes for yourself will help you in this process.

2. Your Loved One's Unique Personality and Needs:

We know that people with disabilities have particular kinds of needs. It often means that they have particular challenges related to communication, physical care, social interaction and medical needs. It often means that they may have very specific kinds of reactions to the world around them, including sensory issues, making it hard for them to interpret what's happening. Usually, as a caregiver, you and other people who know your loved one with a disability well have special knowledge about the way he or she communicates. You have come to know the "cues" that something is happening. It might be confusion, anxiety, anger, frustration or excitement. Someone who does not know your loved one might read these signs incorrectly and inadvertently set off a chain of events that set your loved one up for failure. The more information Independent Respite Providers have, the more likely they are to assist your loved one to be successful.

Make notes for yourself about these things. Families sometimes find it hard to "tell their story" over and over. Putting things in writing often makes it easier to do this. Sometimes it is easy to get distracted in the conversation and a written guide helps to focus on the things that are important. Sharing information at the time you are interviewing and screening a new Independent Respite Provider helps you both to decide if the Independent Respite Provider's skills, interests and personality fit with your loved one.

In consulting with families about the development of this booklet, caregivers said that they wanted the Independent Respite Provider to have knowledge about their loved one's disability, but it was just as important that the Independent Respite Provider think about their loved one as an person, get to know them as a unique individual and understand how their disability affects them. Your loved one is a person first who has a particular disability that affects how they interact with the world. Help the Independent Respite Provider to understand your loved one as a person, not just the labels. How can the Independent Respite Provider help move towards the vision you and your loved one have for his or her life?

3. Moving towards goals and vision:

What do you and your loved one picture for his or her future? This vision likely includes friends, activities that are meaningful, connections to their community, safety and security and skills that help them to live their life in the best and most independent way that they can. The Independent Respite Provider is not there to be a friend for your loved one, but instead a bridge builder who can help your love one pursue these dreams. Think about how you want them to use their time to help your loved one nurture friendships and relationships, build connections in their community, have valued roles and build skills to use in the future.

4. Reflecting on Support Needs:

As someone who loves and cares about a person with a disability, you will be aware of how their disability affects them. Think about how you might describe their needs to an Independent Respite Provider who is meeting him or her for the first time and how you want an Independent Respite Provider to provide the right kind of support.

Clearly describing your loved one's personality, interests, abilities and needs is critical in choosing and preparing someone to provide support for your loved one with a disability and your family. **Write out a profile of your loved one.** Have the information in a binder that you can update as the needs of your loved one and family change. Having it written will help you keep things organized and not overlook information. It also helps to keep things positive and focused on your loved one's strengths, interests and challenges. Include the following information:

Communication:

- How does your loved one communicate?
- Are there particular words, signs, or other methods that you use in times of distress or anxiety?
- Are there ways that you encourage them to ask questions or make their needs known?
- Do they use any communication devices?

Creating and Maintaining Relationships:

- What helps your loved one feel most comfortable with others?
- Are there things that help them to connect to other people?
- When do they need space from others?
- What types of activities help them to break down barriers with others?

Sensory Issues:

- Are there things that affect your loved one such as crowded environments, noise level, smells, colours, texture or feeling of clothing?
- How are they most comfortable and how do you help them to deal with these issues?

Activities and Play:

- Are there particular activities that your loved one likes to do?
- What are the activities that they need the highest level of support with?
- Are there activities that they can enjoy independently?

- Is there a regular community program that your loved one can participate in with support (e.g. parks and recreation, Girl Guides, Scouts, choir, etc.)

Responses through Challenging Behaviours:

- Are there situations when your loved one responds in a way that is challenging to support them?
- What does this look like?
- How do you find it most effective to help them move through a difficult time?
- Are there things that you avoid because it leads to problems?
- What is the best plan for safety for your loved one?

Physical Needs:

- What are the physical needs that your loved one requires support with?
- Does this include help in the bathroom, eating, doing up their seatbelt, dressing?
- Is there any special equipment that the person supporting them needs to know about?

Medical Needs:

- Does your loved one have any special medical needs that the needs to know about, including seizures, allergies, medications, diet.
- What is the emergency plan for any medical issue?
- What are the specific instructions about any medications or medical needs?

Cultural or Religious Background:

- There may be things that are important within your family that the Direct Support Provider must know to respect your family's cultural or religious background.

5. Based on Your Experience Who is the Best Person to Support your Loved One with a Disability?

Develop a list of traits that you hope to see in an Independent Respite Provider. If you define what is most comfortable for you and your loved one with a disability it will assist you in recruiting and screening an Independent Respite Provider.

Some different examples are:

- comfortable helping my loved one participate in community activities,
- is a “connector” helping to nurture relationships and meaningful roles
- relaxed- not too rigid, open to new things, calm demeanour during stressful times
- structured- has an organized approach
- willing to implement specific kinds of activities, responses and techniques

- is a real problem solver- has an open mind about how to solve problems without getting flustered
- is committed to having my loved one be included in the community
- has a warm and open disposition

Having someone involved in your home and with your family

Having an Independent Respite Provider involved in your family is both a great opportunity and a stressor. We know that sometimes, having someone coming into your home is difficult. Perhaps you feel you'd just like to attend to other things, perhaps you are having a bad day, or perhaps the kids have just made a big mess. Families have the right to expect that the Independent Respite Provider will keep their family information private and confidential. They also have the right to determine how their loved one is to be cared for, keeping in mind that the more control over the day to day supports a family has, the more likely that a provider will be found to be an employee.

“Setting boundaries” is a formal way of saying that you need to keep in mind the reason that the Independent Respite Provider is in your home. You may want them to feel comfortable, but how you do that depends on the style of your family. While you want to develop an open and trusting relationship, the person is not there to be a friend or confidant, nor are you finding a “friend” for your loved one. They are there to provide the care and support for the loved one and to fulfill the responsibilities that you have agreed to. Having healthy boundaries allows you to be clear about what your role and the role of the Independent Respite Provider is and to not feel that you need to solve problems that are beyond you. Here are some things that you need to consider:

- We recommend that you never lend money or borrow money.
- Keep your times that you socialize with the Independent Respite Provider to occasions that are focused on your loved one, such as your loved one's birthday party.
- Do not discuss your own personal problems with the Independent Respite Provider
- If you are going to cancel or change the time you need support, give the Independent Respite Provider as much notice as you can.
- Encourage the Independent Respite Provider to set a time to discuss plans and issues with you on a regular basis. This gives them the knowledge that you can be approached and wish to be involved.
- Be thoughtful and clear about your expectations around communication and the use of social media, texting, applications such as “Snapchat, Instagram” etc.

Following these guidelines helps both the Independent Respite Provider and family to define their roles. It is important for both the family and the Independent Respite Provider to be flexible, considerate and respectful.

