



Benefits of Planned and Crisis Respite Care

Introduction

The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center launched an Outcome Evaluation Initiative in 1998 to develop instruments, in the form of surveys, for measuring the efficacy of planned and crisis respite programs. After being field tested and revised, the instruments were field tested again in 2002. Following this field testing, the instruments were revised based on feedback from participants and published in *Evaluating and Reporting Outcomes: A Guide for Respite and Crisis Respite Program Managers* (ARCH, 2nd ed.).

Families receiving Planned Respite Care (tending to be recurrent and occurring over extended periods of time) represented the full spectrum of racial membership, family income, educational achievement, and housing situation. Families receiving Crisis Respite Care (tending, as the name implies, to occur on short notice, usually during a family crisis) covered the full racial spectrum but tended to be less well educated, have fewer financial resources and to have less viable housing options.

The surveys asked questions designed to examine how respite affected such things as caregiver stress, health and family relationships. The data clearly indicate that respite has an overall therapeutic effect on caregivers and their families.

Data analyzed in 2003 were contributed by 20 service programs, representing 43 program sites from across the United States. Sample sizes were 584 families (753 service recipients) for Planned Respite Care, and 430 families (624 service recipients) for Crisis Respite Care. The large majority of findings support the efficacy of Planned Respite and Crisis Respite services. Some of the major findings from that study are outlined in this fact sheet.

FACT: Respite services directly promote the preservation and strengthening of marriages in families caring for a dependent family member or needing crisis respite care for a family member.

For Planned Respite:

- 37% of all caregivers had been or were separated or divorced, with 32% stating that care of a dependent family member contributed to the separation or divorce
- only 6% of caregivers had separated or divorced since receiving respite
- married caregivers rated their spousal relationships as "moderately strained" prior to respite
- after respite, spousal stress was reduced to "slightly strained" and the difference was statistically significant

FACT: Respite services directly contribute to a reduction in the likelihood of child abuse and neglect, and in the likelihood of removal of children from their homes; and contribute directly to the safety of children receiving care.

For Planned Respite:

- 15% of families had placed dependent family members in out-of-home care prior to receiving respite
- only 3% had placed family members in out-of-home care since receiving respite
- Practice wisdom suggests that caregivers tend to underestimate the risk of maltreating their dependent family members or placing them in out-of-home care. Even though the caregivers reported risks as being generally low, there were significant reductions both in the risks of maltreatment and out-of-home placement, after receiving Planned Respite.

For Crisis Respite:

- 20% of caregivers would have had to leave their child(ren) with an inappropriate caregiver if Crisis Respite had not been available
- 20% of caregivers would have had to keep their child(ren) with them in an inappropriate situation if Crisis Respite had not been available
- 2% of caregivers would have left their child(ren) unattended if Crisis Respite had not been available
- 11% of caregivers said they would have requested out-of-home placement for their child(ren) were Crisis Respite not available
- an additional 36% said that it was "moderately" to "extremely" likely that their children would have been placed in out-of-home care by authorities, were Crisis Respite not available
- 91% of caregivers said they felt their child(ren) were "very" to "extremely" safe while receiving respite care
- 82% said that the availability of Crisis Respite reduced the risk of harm to their child(ren) to a "very" or "extremely" high degree

FACT: Respite services directly contribute to reductions in stress and related mental/physical health problems among service recipients, as well as increases in quality of life for dependent persons and their family caregivers.

For Planned Respite:

- the mean stress level of caregivers prior to receiving respite was "quite stressed"
- the mean stress level after receiving respite was reduced to "somewhat stressed"; the difference was statistically significant
- differences between pre-respite and post-respite physical/mental/emotional health measures were also statistically significant
- the "quality of relationship" rating of caregivers with respect to their dependent family member prior to receiving respite was "moderately strained"

- the "quality of relationship" rating of caregivers with respect to their dependent family member after receiving respite improved to "slightly strained"; the difference was statistically significant

For Crisis Respite:

- prior to receiving Crisis Respite, 24% of caregivers rated themselves as "extremely stressed, and an additional 46% rated themselves as either "quite" or "very" stressed
- the "pre-Crisis Respite" mean stress rating of 4.18 (on a 7-point scale) was reduced to a mean of 2.64 after Crisis Respite; the difference was statistically significant

The above facts and findings are summarized from a larger report describing the evaluation methodology, program recruitment and participation, data collection and analysis, and the full range of results. The essential "facts" are presented here, in abbreviated form. Complex between-variable relationships are not presented here, but are available in the full report. The full report can be found at www.archrespite.org.

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FRIENDS has existed since 1995 and is a collaborative effort of organizations with many years of experience in delivering training and technical assistance. For more information, please visit the FRIENDS website, www.friendsnrc.org

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