

## THE RESPITE CENTER

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Respite Center provides crisis intervention, counseling, support and center-based crisis/respite and emergency child care for Dane County parents with children aged from birth through fourteen years.

We are open 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The Respite Center is the only 24 hour crisis/respite resource immediately available for parents in Dane County, who do not have to have a child with special needs to qualify for services.

The Respite Center has a group child care license and a group home license from the State of Wisconsin. The Respite Center is accredited by the City of Madison Day Care Unit.

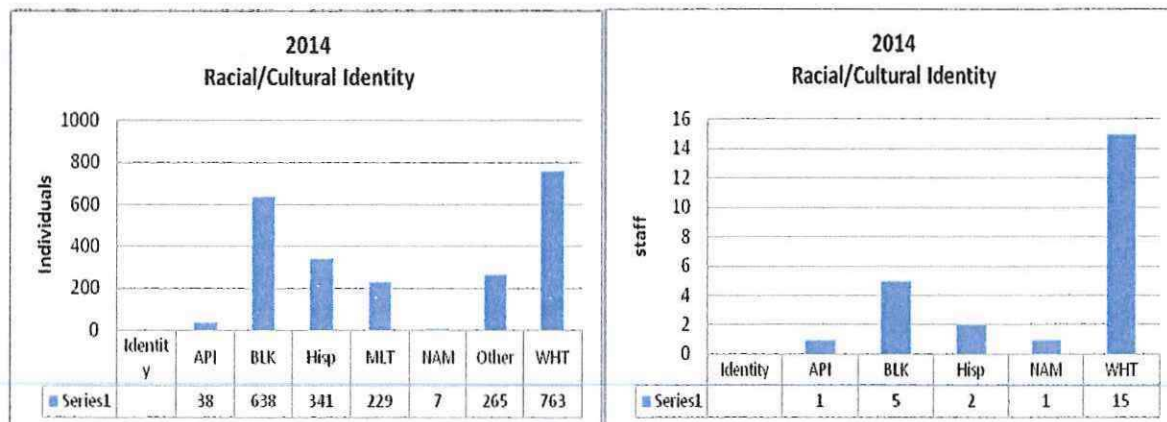
The Respite Center opened in 1979 and has been funded by the City of Madison, Office of Community Services, the Dane County Department of Human Services and United Way since it became its own 501(c) 3 in 1984.

In 2015 United Way cut its support by \$55,000, and with another \$55,000 reduction in 2016, plans on completely eliminating its support to the Respite Center program.

We serve 12 to 15 children in a 24 hour day. We turn down at least 10-15 requests for specific care every day. There is no average amount of care per family/situation but four to sixteen hours of care per scheduled time is the norm.

In 2014 - 457 families with 832 children received 26,064 hours of child care.

We are serving the population that is underserved elsewhere.



A Friday afternoon between 3 and 5 pm (REALLY!).

- In the office, I speak to a young mom, who just found out that a condition of her husband's probation is to have no contact with her for two years. This was completely unexpected. She doesn't understand it. They have a 2 year-old son. Without him living with her she fears being unable to afford housing, becoming homeless, etc. She said they are working on their problems and wants for him to live at home. While she is here, she contacts her spouse's attorney, then asks if we can help her with the letter she wants to write to the court. I agree we can help her with this in the near future.

- I do an intake with a young single mother who is new to Madison. She is starting a new job on Monday and has no child care arranged yet. She has some family to help her but they are busy with their own jobs and can't help her with the child care she needs to start her new job.
- In the office, I speak to a mother of three pre-school aged children when she comes to pick up her children. She and her husband continue to need respite. She works full time. Her husband does not work because he has chronic migraine headaches, and the cause is unknown. It is very hard for him to care for their children while she is at work, and they can't afford childcare to give the needed relief during her workday. I schedule some future respite care and I give her a referral to a funding source that might be able to provide money for some day care.
- I speak to a case manager who brings children here, to tell her that we'd like to be included in a crisis plan for this family. The previous weekend, one of the children (age 6) was brought here by the police because he was totally out of mother's control and the police thought it was unsafe for him to remain with mom at that time.
- On the phone, I arrange respite with a mom of three kids who is separating from her husband. She has called to check on our availability throughout the day. The decision to separate from her husband was just made and she feels that she must have a few hours to herself.
- On the phone, I arrange overnight care for a mom of two children, a baby and a toddler. She is moving out of state tomorrow. Her husband is incarcerated and she can't afford to stay in her apartment without his income. Tonight she has nowhere for herself and the children to stay. She expects to sleep in her car and would like it if we could keep the children overnight so they can be safe and warm. We agree to provide the care for the night.
- On the phone, I speak to the step-mother of a 12 year-old boy. The police had been at the home the night before. The child was threatening to run away after she and his dad confronted him about smoking in his bedroom. The child is angry and non-compliant and she doesn't feel she can manage him. She said he can't go to his mother's house because there are no rules and structure for him there. We talk for awhile about parenting strategies, some possibilities for social services, and the services we have to offer. She'll call back after speaking to her husband.
- I speak to a mother on the phone who said she is "in the depths of despair." Her 8 year-old child has been screaming most nights for hours. The mother is upset that the child's behavior is going to mean they can't continue living where they are because it is so disruptive. She is afraid that they will then become homeless. The mother wonders if it would be ok to have the child living with a different friend each week because she can't handle her. She said that the child's father, with whom they no longer have contact, was very abusive to them both. She said they have not received counseling for this. She said she doesn't have time for counseling since she is busy with her school work. The mom says that she, herself, was badly abused as a child and comes from a war-torn country. The mom doesn't understand why her child is acting this way since she considers that her own childhood was harsher and she didn't behave in this manner. She has made a call to a child psychiatrist to see if medication could help the child but is told that the next appointment is in 6 weeks. In the background, I can hear the child screaming and sobbing constantly, saying that her mom hates her and calls her names. Before the mother ends the call, she agrees to call the family doctor to get some help before the counseling appointment in 6 weeks. I also give her the phone number of a crisis response unit that might be able to come to the home to help.
- Before leaving, I ask the childcare staff about a four year-old boy who has been at Respite Center three days of this week. His mother is homeless and staying at Salvation Army. Over the weekend, her back went out and she is temporarily in a wheelchair. The child has been staying with his father at his home during the nights, and has come to the Respite Center while his dad works during the day. The child has had difficult behaviors at the Respite Center. Staff attributes some of this to the fact that he hasn't been able to see his mother for much of the week and the family routines are completely disrupted by their homelessness and the mother's medical condition.





March 18, 2015

Dear Meg Miller,

Center for Families has recruited us as individuals who use their services to serve on a Community Action Board. Our job is to help inform the agency of community needs and assist the agency in its efforts to grow accordingly.

We have been meeting as a Board since August 2014 and have had many discussions about the need to expand Respite services. We have experienced first-hand what an incredible resource it is. Most of us used the Respite Center before joining the Community Action Board and it played a vital role during very difficult times in our lives. Our circumstances include life threatening illness, homelessness, AODA issues and recovery, single parenthood, and sudden loss of income. Most of us have wondered what we would have done without The Respite Center. Not only did it provide us with time we needed to take care of ourselves and our responsibilities, but our children adore the place. The Family Service Workers and Child Care Specialists all hold a very special place in our hearts and it is because of the service we received at the Respite Center that many of us are volunteering our time with Center for Families.

It has come to our attention that United Way is ending their financial contribution to The Respite Center. We are requesting that the City of Madison and Dane County provide necessary funding so that, not only can The Respite Center remain open, but so that it has the means to expand its services. Expanding The Respite Center's services would have a huge impact. Stronger families mean stronger communities.

Sincerely,

***Lisa Anders, Bradyn Austin, Crystal Corona, Marisol Gonzales, Faith Marlee, Jessica McCarter, Keith McCarter, Victor Rojas***

Community Action Board  
Center for Families



eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
madison



Torrie Kopp Mueller, CAPSW  
Housing Director  
YWCA Madison  
101 E. Mifflin St.  
Madison, WI 53703

March 26, 2015

Meg Miller  
Interim Executive Director  
The Respite Center  
2120 Fordem Ave. #180  
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Meg:

I am writing to you today regarding the loss of United Way funding for The Respite Center. This is devastating news for the YWCA Madison as many of our program participants also benefit from the services The Respite Center provides.

Many of the families we work with have utilized The Respite Center. Some use the services to attend job interviews. The Respite Center may help bridge the gap for childcare while someone is job searching. Some families use The Respite Center so they can attend their mental health or other doctor's appointments. It is very difficult to be engaged in one's healthcare if they are also watching their children. This service is very useful to our families who are on SSI and don't have regular childcare for their kids. Having access to The Respite Center for these uses, helps families achieve goals and become stronger.

I think the most important use of The Respite Center is for parents who have no supports in their lives. The Respite Center can provide these families with a needed break. It allows the parent to catch up on sleep or just relax. The child(ren) get to have fun playing with different toys and other kids. These breaks may allow parents to be better at the job of raising their children. Parents need to take care of themselves in order to fully be there for their children. There are many families in our community who do not have family or friend supports that can provide a needed break. This is what makes The Respite Center desperately needed in our community.





March 11, 2015

Dear Meg,

It is with a deep sense of concern and urgency that I write this letter of support for the Respite Center's request to increase funding from DCDHS and the City of Madison to offset the devastating cuts from United Way. It is imperative to this community that the Respite Center remains able to do its critical work on behalf of vulnerable children.

The Respite Center is a unique service in Dane County, there is no comparable program. Social service and Law Enforcement agencies have all seen an increase in the number of child abuse cases they are addressing, and the Respite Center has had a similar increase. Safe Harbor relies on the 24-hour availability of the Respite Center for our clients. At Safe Harbor, a child may be taken into custody of DCDHS due to abuse by a parent, and that child goes to the Respite Center until a foster home can be secured. The non-offending parents we work with use the Respite Center for their children so that they can attend a court hearing or trial preparation. And finally, we know the Respite Center plays an important part in child abuse prevention, and is a key resource we give to parents in order to manage their own stress. The Respite Center is available on an emergency basis, and is a critical element of the coordinated community response to address child abuse and neglect in Madison. They are literally a beacon of light on a dark night when a child has nowhere else to go.

I have personally seen the incredible care and support the Respite Center offers the most vulnerable clients. I have seen children who are under immense stress at home be beaming with smiles when I see them playing on the Respite Center playground. Children who would be terrified of going with an unknown caregiver are thrilled when they learn they will be going to Respite Center again. The Respite Center offers these children the gift of security, safety, care, and freedom to be a child that is so often missing in the lives of abused and under-privileged children.

The loss of the Respite Center would be devastating to this community and its vulnerable children. The cost of supporting the Respite Center will save the County and the City of Madison countless dollars in the short and long term. It is the hope of all child-serving organizations in Dane County that financial support will be increased so that the Respite Center can keep its doors open.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Ginsburg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Ginsburg, MSSW, LCSW  
Program Manager

# DAIS

DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION SERVICES

March 17, 2015

Meg Miller  
Center for Families  
2120 Fordem Ave  
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Ms. Miller,

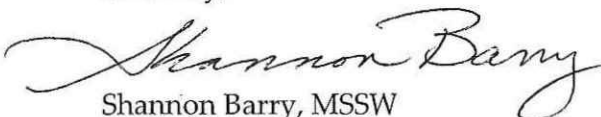
I was deeply saddened to hear about the loss of funding endured by the Respite Center, which has been a crucial resource for our clients here at DAIS. So many of those we serve face barriers such as poverty, racism, trauma and abuse, and the Respite Center has been a powerful partner for their recovery and long-term safety.

Our staff feels strongly about the impact the Respite Center has had on our clients. Our Family Advocates (i.e. case managers) have shared with me how the Respite Center is an essential part of the safety planning they do with clients before and after shelter stays. They feel that the Center has been essential for DAIS clients working to secure employment and housing, and that it is equally vital in empowering clients to enhance their own self-care and well-being. Our Crisis Response Coordinator has referred numerous families to the Respite Center, all of whom have reported extremely positive experiences with the caring and professional staff. Recently, our LEAP Crisis Response Advocate spoke with a woman referred to DAIS by law enforcement who was told by a City of Madison police officer that the Respite Center might be a great resource for her and her family.

Our Children's Program Coordinator has shared that the Respite Center has taken the time to serve our clients even when at capacity. She also emphasized that because we can't provide continuous childcare at DAIS, the Respite Center provides a vital and necessary service to the families we serve. Finally, she shared that the children she's spoken to who have stayed at the Respite Center consistently report feeling safe and happy there: for those enduring stress and instability, the Center allows them to simply play and be kids.

If the Respite Center programming cannot be sustained, it would be a great loss—both to the community and to the many families who depend on your services.

Sincerely,



Shannon Barry, MSSW  
Executive Director

One. And for all.





# DISTRICT ATTORNEY DANE COUNTY



ISMAEL OZANNE  
District Attorney

April 08, 2015

RE: Respite Center Funding Cut

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Dane County District Attorney's Office Crime Response Program. I was saddened to hear of the loss of funding from the United Way for the Respite Center. Our unit works around the clock with traumatized crime victims and witnesses, 365 days a year. Our Trauma Specialists rely heavily on the Respite Center in the work that we do with families and children. Because crime and tragedies happen unexpectedly, we often need to find a safe place for children to be while we attend to the immediate issues involving the investigation. There are simply no other reputable child care agencies in Dane County that we can turn to in an emergency situation such as these. We find that when parents and caregivers are traumatized from a crime, that they are often unable to take care of themselves and especially their children in the way that they normally would.

Recently I was working with a woman whose elderly mother was tragically found dead. The surviving daughter was under so much duress with the loss of her mother and the active police investigation, that it was becoming impossible for her to be the sole caregiver for her three young children with no breaks. Because her youngest has a severe disability it was very hard for her to find help with her kids. The Respite Center was able to give this woman scheduled breaks so she could plan the funeral and take care of herself. The Respite Center provided excellent care for her children, which was essential to her healing process and overall wellbeing.

Another example of our use of the Respite Center was not long ago when a family flew in from Georgia to testify at a sexual assault trial. The mother and young victim needed to be at the courthouse the entire day and had no options on where the younger two children would be for the process. The Respite Center was able to take these kids in for the day and keep them happy and occupied while their mom was stuck in an extremely stressful environment. The victim and her mother were better equipped to manage the anxiety of the situation because the younger two were safe and sheltered from the experience.

On behalf of the entire Crime Response Program staff, I sincerely hope the funding priorities of the City of Madison Community Services Commission and Dane County Department of Human Services make the necessary increase to maintain this essential service. Our community has been very fortunate to prioritize vulnerable parents and children and I certainly hope that we don't digress by losing a wonderful asset such as the Respite Center.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Julie Foley  
Crime Response Program

**Attn.:** c/o Meg Miller, Center for Families  
2120 Fordem Ave.  
Madison, WI 53704

April 2015

**RE: Strong and Serious Support for the Respite Childcare Program of Center for Families**

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Rainbow Project staff, Board of Directors and especially on behalf of the children and families in our community, I want to thank you for this opportunity to strongly support funding for the Respite Emergency Childcare Program, whose dedicated and highly trained and experienced staff have served our community with excellence, for over three decades.

Since 1981, the Rainbow Project staff have provided specialized trauma prevention and intervention services for 10,146 young children and 9,578 adult caregivers and their families, who have experienced often multiple traumas. The Rainbow Project and Respite Program have worked closely and successfully together over the past 35 years, providing mutual referrals and needed services to assist mutually served, children and families, to recover from these tragic experiences and move on in their lives.

Long before interagency collaboration was the trend, the Respite Center and Rainbow Project worked together. It is well-known for those of us working in the front lines day to day, to understand the importance of timeliness in providing needed services and that in the bigger picture, a continuum of services is needed for children and families to eventually avoid needing crisis intervention, however the entry point for many families may be the crisis respite services that can be the critical safety net to move to ongoing trauma intervention. This integral, seamless service, whether to prevent domestic violence, child abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse, community violence, mental illness, are the foundation and a community model that the Respite Center has been a part of establishing.

Current trends and innovative programming are essential to our community of care and response. Evaluation of effectiveness of services is essential in understanding beyond "silo" funding what it takes to ensure a healthy community for children and families. The services provided by the Respite Program are a part of the essential foundation which, without, only weakens the strong and seamless network essential in working successfully with families.

We hope that you will restore, expand and support this essential service.

Sincerely,

  
Sharyl J. Kato, Executive Director  
The Rainbow Project, Inc.



Helping Young Children and Families in Stress  
Serving the community since 1980  
[www.rainbowproject.bizland.com](http://www.rainbowproject.bizland.com)