

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1344

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to increasing access to respite care for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their caregivers.

Brief Description: Increasing access to respite care for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their caregivers.

Sponsors: Representatives Barnard, Cortes, Dufault, Couture, Farivar, Reed, Hill, Caldier, Taylor, Pollet, Nance, Gregerson and Callan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/29/25, 2/14/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to submit a waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to add respite care to the list of aggregate services available under the Basic Plus waiver.
- Caps the portion of the Basic Plus waiver's aggregate services budget that may be utilized for respite care at 30 percent.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Bergquist, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Burnett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bernbaum, Dent, Goodman, Hill, Ortiz-Self, Penner and Taylor.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Home and Community-Based Services Waivers.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to obtain services and support based on individual preferences, capabilities, and needs. While some DDA clients live in residential habilitation centers, an institutional setting, most clients live in the community. Home and community-based services waivers allow clients who live in community settings to receive optional services at the same level as they would receive in an institutional setting.

The DDA offers services under five waivers: Core, Basic Plus, Community Protection, Individual and Family Services, and Children's Intensive In-Home Behavioral Support (CIIBS). The waiver services provided to DDA clients are designed to promote everyday activities, routines, and relationships, and may include services targeted at community integration, support services provided by contracted professionals, caregiving, and equipment, supplies, and other specialized services.

The Basic Plus waiver serves DDA clients of all ages. Services are provided in the client's own home, in an adult family home, or an adult residential center. In addition to specified services and supports for which a DDA client is assessed and approved for a certain number of hours, the Basic Plus waiver also offers a service menu subject to a dollar limit of \$6,192 per year. These are called "aggregate services."

Respite Care.

Respite care is short-term intermittent care to provide relief for a person who lives with a DDA client and is their primary care provider, whether paid or unpaid. For certain waivers, including the Basic Plus waiver, the client is assessed by the DDA and authorized for a maximum number of respite hours.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By September 1, 2025, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) must submit a waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to add respite care to the list of aggregate services available under the Basic Plus waiver. Upon approval from the CMS, the DDA must immediately update the Basic Plus waiver to include respite care as an aggregate service. The portion of the total aggregate services budget that may be used for respite care is limited to 30 percent.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill modifies provisions to apply only to the Basic Plus waiver, and references to the Children's Intensive In-Home Behavioral Support waiver are eliminated.

The portion of the Basic Plus aggregate services budget that may be used for respite care is capped at 30 percent of the total aggregate services budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill provides options. It gives Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) clients the flexibility to use aggregate dollars that currently go unused. Respite is one of the most sought-after services and one of the least expensive. It is also matched with federal funds. With this change, clients would gain an extra 160 hours of respite. Increasing respite benefits both the caretaker and the person being cared for. Many people lose the opportunity for constructive activities when they leave school, and this service provides a highly flexible way for a person with disabilities to engage in the community. Respite reduces isolation, allows a variety of activities, and provides face to face personal care. Currently, people lose their place in respite programs when they run out of hours before the next cycle and have to go on a waitlist to get back onto these life changing services.

Numerous people have stories of the difficulty of caring for a loved one with disabilities without adequate respite. This type of care can be exhausting and completely overwhelming and create safety issues. Caretakers endure a high level of stress, facing complicated logistics, long hours, physical demands, and attending to complex medical needs. Babysitters for children with disabilities are very expensive and not affordable for all families. Love alone is not enough and families need support. The alternatives include out of home care and emergency room visits, which are costly.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Stephanie Barnard, prime sponsor; Kayla Lindley; Stacy Dym, The Arc of Washington State; Jim Wellman, parent advocate; Linda Hyatt; Therese Vafaezadeh, NA; and Natasha Tall.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Amy Foster; and Judy Barrere, Tavon.