

Pony Bird and NextStep for Life have joined forces!

Have you heard? As of July 1, 2022, NextStep for Life and Pony Bird, Inc merged! The new organization will be called Pony Bird and will serve more than 1,200 individuals with physical, intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities with more than 300 employees. Together we are simply stronger. The MyCare respite voucher program will continue to be available to support families. This guide has been developed to help you make the most out of the MyCare funding you have available. If you need this or any materials in some alternate format (Ex. Large print, audio, etc.) contact the Pony Bird Family Support office with your request.

Parent Guide to MyCare



**Pony Bird, Inc.
Family Support
636-282-1414 | 636-933-3764**

Keep this guide as a reference as you use MyCare.

Parent Guide to MyCare

You have been referred to the MyCare respite voucher program by your Service/Support Coordinator at either the St. Louis Regional Office (SLRO/DMH) or Developmental Disability Advocates (DDAdvocates). You may be getting this guide along with some forms that you need to complete and return to finalize your enrollment in MyCare. Be sure to return these forms because your enrollment in MyCare is not complete until we receive them.

Hopefully your Service Coordinator has explained some of the basic details about MyCare. This guide will answer most of your questions and if you have more just give us a call or refer to the MyCare page online at ponybird.org. You can also email us at this address:

FamilySupports@ponybird.org

In a nutshell, MyCare is a respite voucher program. We secure funds that we can make available to you so you can use them to hire and pay someone to take care of your family member while you get a break.

Find more detail on the *MyCare* page at nextstepforlife.org. Later in 2022 this may be shifted to a new page on ponybird.org.

5 Easy Steps to Get a Break with MyCare

1 Hire & Screen the person who will take care of your family member.

This is the most difficult part of MyCare and we'll talk more about this later in this guide.

2 Contact the NextStep Family Support Office to get a voucher.

You can call, email, or even fax your request. More details to follow.

3 Enjoy your break!

We hope by using MyCare you will be able to find time to relax, recharge, and find relief from stress.

4 Complete & Sign the voucher with the person you hired.

Dates, times and payment information gets entered on the voucher before you and your provider sign it.

5 Submit your voucher for payment.

You can fax, email or mail your voucher back to our office for payment. We'll give you more details later.

we can help

Sound easy? Once you have hired someone and gotten them screened, using MyCare is pretty simple. It is the hiring and screening that can be more difficult or uncomfortable for some families. If you have trouble with any part of this process, let us know. We have staff available that can assist you. They can walk you through step by step.

1

BEFORE YOU USE MYCARE—HIRE & SCREEN

- You need to decide who you will hire to take care of your family member so you can get a break. It might be a good idea to find two people who you can pay with MyCare funds.
- You cannot pay someone with MyCare funds if they are a parent, step-parent, or guardian of the person receiving care. You cannot hire anyone who lives in the home with you and your loved one. You can however hire other relatives or friends if they need to be paid in order to provide care for your family member.
- You will need to hire your own provider but we can try to help. We have resource materials we can provide to you or we can talk with you to offer suggestions. A registry of people interested in providing respite was started in 2021. You can request a copy of the MyCare Registry.
- Anyone you want to pay using MyCare funds must have a positive screening on the MO Family Care Safety Registry. This is the part of using MyCare that confuses families the most so we are going to try to make it as simple as possible.
- After you have hired someone, ask if they are on the MO Family Care Safety Registry (FCSR).



IF THEY ARE ALREADY ON THE REGISTRY, here is what you will need to do to get a screening letter. (Anyone who has worked in Missouri with children, the elderly, or people who have disabilities is probably already on the registry. If they are currently working for an agency doing direct care, they might be able to obtain a copy of their FCSR screening from their other employer. If not, a simple phone call is required.)

- You can call the FCSR at 1-866-422-6872. Tell them you are hiring someone to do respite care for your family member who has a disability. Give them the name of the person you are hiring and let them know that the person is already registered. You will also need their social security number, date of birth, and address. Your conversation might sound something like “Hi, my name is Jane Jones and I’m hiring Sally Smith to take care of my daughter who has a disability. I would like to receive a screening on her. I know she is already registered...”
- If you prefer, your worker can call the FCSR at 1-866-422-6872 and explain that they are hoping to be hired by someone to provide care for their family member with a disability. They will be able to provide the needed information to obtain the screening.



- Regardless of who calls, a letter will be mailed or emailed to the worker. If you call, you should also get the letter. It will state if the person has a clean screening or if there is some type of offense that popped up when the screening was done.
- You will need to send a copy of the letter to the MyCare office.
- If the screening is clear, this person is eligible to be paid with MyCare funds.
- If the screening indicates an offense, the MyCare office will do some further research. If the offense is not on the list of disqualifying offenses, the person may still be paid with MyCare funds. If it is a disqualifying offense, you will need to find someone else to hire if you want to use MyCare funding.

The person you hire is YOUR employee so we cannot obtain this screening for you. State law requires that workers in jobs like respite care must be on the state registry so people who hire them can obtain a screening.

IF THEY ARE UNSURE OR NOT ALREADY ON THE REGISTRY, it will be necessary to go online to check on their status before doing anything else.

- Go online to **<http://health.mo.gov/safety/fcsr/>**
- From the home page of the FCSR, click on “About the Registry”. This will furnish detailed instructions for your provider to check to see if they are already registered and how to register.
- The first thing you will need to do is check to make sure they are NOT already registered.
- If they are found in the database, refer to the instructions in the previous section to call and obtain the screening.
- If they are not found in the database, they will need to register. Follow the directions below.



IF THEY NEED TO REGISTER they can do so online if they have a credit or debit card to use for payment. You can assist them with this process by sitting with them to register and using your card to pay the fees. In 2021 the total fees were \$15.25 if you register online. If you print the receipt, MyCare funds can reimburse you for the expense. Call to find out how to request it.



- They will also need an email account. If they do not already have one, there are several free options. They cannot use yours.
- If you &/or the worker cannot or prefer not to register online, you can print the Worker Registration Form to complete and mail with a \$14 check or money order. The MyCare office can also provide you with the form.

- For a new registration, the screening letter should automatically be emailed or mailed to confirm the registration. This letter is needed in the MyCare office before you can be reimbursed for respite fees.

FYI: Your respite worker will need to be screened every year. We will send you a reminder each year so you will know to obtain a new screening letter. There will be no cost to request a screening once the person is already registered.

2 Now you're ready to go!

Getting a MyCare Voucher

- You will need to call or email us to request a voucher each time (or each month) prior to using respite care if you hope to be reimbursed through funds that have been made available to you in MyCare.
- We will need to know your name, the month you plan to use the voucher, the amount of funds you want to use and if you want us to mail it to you or email it to you.
- You can call after our business hours and leave a general voice mail message to request a voucher.

Phone: 636-282-1414 or 636-933-3764	Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Email: familysupports@ponybird.org (If you have a printer, we can even email the voucher to you.)	If you want to pick it up: Pony Bird 3655 Baptist Park Rd Festus, MO 63028

3 Coordinate details with the person you hired and screened. Be sure to agree on dates and rate of pay. Get your break. Enjoy yourself!



Let's talk a little bit how much you will pay your provider. You negotiate how much per day or per hour you will pay for respite care. There are limits to how much NextStep will reimburse you through MyCare. In 2021 that maximum rate is \$12/hour up to a maximum of \$200/day. You can pay more but this is the maximum amount you will be reimbursed.

4 Complete and Sign Your Voucher

- At the end of the respite care you and your provider should complete the information on the voucher.
- Your provider's name and contact information needs to be entered as well as your address if it is new.

- Show the dates and times for each respite/break you used.
- Show the amount you have or will be paying your provider for each date. Your provider may want to be paid immediately after the respite hours or they may be willing to wait until you receive the check from our office.
- Both you and your provider need to sign on the designated spaces.
- You need to answer the few questions at the bottom of the voucher.



TIP: If you have a camera on a cell phone, we suggest you and your provider take a picture of the voucher so you have a record just in case.



5 Submit your voucher for payment

You can now submit the voucher for payment. Here are a few options for sending it in:

Mail: Pony Bird Family Support PO Box 190 Mapaville, MO 63065 	Fax: 636-282-1420 or 636-933-3420 (Call to confirm it was received.) 
Scan/Email: familysupports@ponybird.org (You will receive email confirmation.) 	Smart Phone: Some families have been able to take a photo of the voucher & submit it to our email address.
Actual Location of office: Pony Bird 3655 Baptist Park Rd Festus, MO 63028	

If we receive your voucher by Wednesday of most weeks by noon, it will be processed for payment that week. Checks are usually mailed on Friday. If you want to pick it up, you will need to let us know when you submit your voucher. Checks to be picked up will be available in the MyCare office after 10:00 on Friday. Call before you arrive.

Repeat!

You have completed the full cycle so now you can repeat these steps anytime you want to get a break. Hiring and screening your worker is really the most complicated part. If you're lucky, you won't have to go through the hiring/screening/training process too often. Using MyCare can be very easy once you use it a few times.



1. Request voucher.
2. Get a break.
3. Fill out voucher.
4. Submit voucher.
5. Get check.



What about an emergency situation?

- If you are faced with an urgent situation and you do not have time to call for a voucher, don't worry. Things happen that cannot always be planned and we understand that. When an urgent need arises, get the help you need and let us know as soon as you can. We can issue the voucher after the care begins. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to have someone screened that you can call on for sudden urgent situations. If you are going to pay someone with MyCare funds and they are already screened, we will be able to release funds to you without delay.
- There are also special funds available to assist families in crisis if they have used all of their available MyCare funds.
- Don't wait for an emergency to use MyCare. Get a provider set up and do a trial run so you will know what to do when you need it in a hurry.



TIP: You need an emergency backup plan. Who would you call to take care of your family member if you have an emergency or someone close to you is in crisis? Every family needs to think about this and create some kind of plan because you might not be thinking clearly if an emergency strikes.

Other Misc. Etc...



TIP: IF you have an important event planned for the future, let us know as soon as possible and we can reserve your voucher. We don't want to run out of money when you need it for a wedding or anniversary or graduation. We only have a limited amount of funding that is allocated by quarter each year. If we run out of funds we can't issue more vouchers until the next quarter and that might be too late for your special event.

- You can access vouchers up to the maximum amount we approve for you each year. Our "year" begins July 1st and ends the following year on June 30th. Every year in July, your maximum funding amount will be renewed and you will receive a notice. Individual maximum amounts can change from year to year depending on available funding. The annual maximum has always been at least \$500 each year.
- It is important for you to remember that all the families enrolled in MyCare share in the available funds each year. Even though we approve you for a maximum amount of funding, there is no guarantee that you will be able to use all of this funding or that funds will be available every time you want a voucher. In any given quarter, voucher requests could exceed the funding amount allocated for the program. If this happens,



you will not be able to obtain the voucher until the next quarter. Quarters begin in the months of July, October, January, and April.

- When emailing us about MyCare please use the familysupports@ponybird.org address. If you email to a specific person in the office, they could be out and it could delay getting your voucher or getting your check. Be sure to use the second “s” in “familysupports” in the email.



REMEMBER:
Just call or email.
We're here for you.

Important



What are your tax responsibilities as an employer?

The people you hire as your respite provider are either your employee or an independent contractor. In many cases, your provider is your employee. Below are excerpts from information on the IRS website. For more information, contact your tax advisor or refer to the IRS Publication 926 Household Employer’s Tax Guide. You can go to the IRS website at irs.gov and look in the Forms and Publications section for this guide. If you do not have access to the Internet, you can call the IRS at 800-829-1040 to request a copy of this guide.

The NextStep offices do not have staff who can advise you on this or any tax related issues. This information is being provided to you as a courtesy. From the IRS...

Topic 756 - Employment Taxes for Household Employees

Household employees include housekeepers, maids, babysitters, gardeners, and others who work in or around your private residence as your employee. Repairmen, plumbers, contractors, and other business people who provide their services as independent contractors, are not your employees. Household workers are your employees if you can control not only the work they do but also how they do it.

Social Security and Medicare Taxes (Federal Insurance Contributions Act – FICA)

If you pay cash wages of \$2,000 or more for 2017 (this threshold can change from year to year) to any one household employee, you generally must withhold 6.2% of social security and 1.45% of Medicare taxes (for a total of 7.65%) from all cash wages you pay to that employee...

Federal Income Tax Withholding

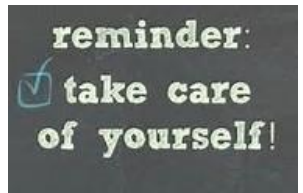
You're not required to withhold federal income tax from wages you pay to a household employee...

Find the full summary at <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc756.html>.

Find more details at <https://www.irs.gov/>

What is expected of families enrolled in *MyCare*?

- ✓ Make getting a break a priority; Make it a habit.
- ✓ Use family, friend, church, and community options to get a break whenever possible where MyCare vouchers are not needed.
- ✓ When you need a break and have to pay for it, use MyCare.
- ✓ Use your approved maximum amount wisely to last the full year.
- ✓ Let us know if you have a new phone number, address, or name.
- ✓ Submit your completed MyCare voucher immediately after receiving care. If you fail to turn them in on time, your request for payment could be rejected.
- ✓ Submit accurate and complete information on each MyCare voucher used.
- ✓ Use MyCare to get the breaks you need to stay strong for your entire family.



GOOD RESPITE: Getting a meaningful break

Getting well-planned, purposeful short breaks from your caregiving role will benefit you and your entire family. You will manage stress better and enjoy better relationships with others. If you fail to get breaks to relax and recharge, you might experience mental and physical health issues over time. However the key is planning your breaks with a purpose. Plan your breaks with a vision in mind of what GOOD RESPITE would look like.



In the words of Henry Kissinger...

If you do not know where you are going, every road will get you nowhere.

Pony Bird has over 35 years of experience helping families get respite care and we know that most caregivers will only take a break if they are sure their loved one is happy, safe, and well cared for in their absence. Being mindful about using respite will improve your chances of having positive respite experiences. Knowing this we encourage you to walk through the steps outlined on the following pages. The Charting the LifeCourse framework can help you find your GOOD RESPITE.

The following material has been adapted by Pony Bird from work developed by MO Family to Family | UMKC Institute for Human Development | UCEDD in partnership with ARCH National Respite Network & Resource Center.

Introducing you to Charting the LifeCourse:

You begin with a dream

You can use the LifeCourse tools to help you plan your GOOD RESPITE. When you take a trip you may need directions (steps) so you might use a roadmap or an app on your phone. Think of LifeCourse as the roadmap that will keep you on track to get where you want to be.

Use the first cloud or a separate sheet of paper to write about your vision for GOOD RESPITE. How will you benefit from your break? What will you do? Who will you spend time with? What will it take to be comfortable leaving your family member? What kind of person do you want to leave your family member with? How much time & how often do you want a break? When do you want to go? What will your family member do while you are gone?



In this storm cloud list what you want to avoid. What would make your break a bad respite? What didn't work in the past? What made you feel uneasy or stressed out when you tried to get a break? What did your loved one not like about the time you were away? What barriers will you have to overcome to get a break?



Once you have a vision of your GOOD RESPITE the next step is to list all the resources you have that can help move you toward that GOOD RESPITE. LifeCourse encourages you to map 5 different kinds of resources and they are represented in this star—Technology, Personal Assets/ Strengths, Relationships, Community-Based, and Eligibility Specific.



- 1. TECHNOLOGY:** How will technology help with getting a break? Think about what you use now & what you could try. A cell phone can help keep you in contact with your loved one & provider when you are not at home. It might allow your loved one to be home alone for short periods of time with you or someone else checking in. Think about medical alert/safety ID; remote monitoring; smart phone/ tablet/ computer; Internet; FaceTime/Skype/video app; GPS locator; video monitoring in



home or at door, etc. You might use the Internet to communicate with an agency or provider; research programs; screen people to hire; use social media; etc.

List technology resources you currently use or could use:

- 2. Personal Assets & Strengths:** Think about your financial resources, personal skills, experience, and abilities. What is your family member able to do with minimal support? Examples for your family member might include the ability to stay home alone for 2



hours; able to dial 911; doesn't wander; has pleasant personality; works 12 hours each week earning spending money. You might have a special bank account or savings. Maybe you have

experience hiring people. How much can you afford to pay to hire someone? Can you use the internet to research programs or recruit people to hire? Can you invest money or take a different job to be able to pay privately to hire people or agencies?

List your personal assets & strengths as well as those of your family member:

3. Relationships: We rely on others in our life to give us advice & support or to lend a hand. How can the people you know help you get a break &/or make it a positive

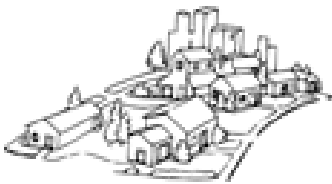


experience? Who might be able to care for your family member or check in with them when you are away?

Who knows someone you can hire? Help you pay someone? Think about members of your family, people at work, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, aids at school, program staff, members of your church, etc. Your service coordinator might have suggestions. Ask around. Ask if they can care for your family member or if they know someone who could. You might be surprised to learn who is willing to help you out or know someone and you won't know unless you ask.

List your relationships:

4. Community-Based Resources: There are things in your community that are available to everyone. Some of these may be appropriate for your family member because they already offer an inclusive setting or they may be willing to adapt for your loved one. If



they need someone to be with them in order to participate, you could hire someone to go with them and this will provide you with a small break. Consider special interest groups like hobby/craft/sport; community/recreation center; YMCA; school latchkey programs; camps; church programs; sitter services; etc. Remember: you like your family

member so others in your community might also like spending time with him/her.

List possible community-based resources:

5. Eligibility Specific: Your family member may qualify for certain supports because of their age, income, disability, diagnosis, or other criteria. This might include school, adult day programs, supported employment, sheltered employment, leisure / camp / socialization programs, Special Olympics, respite programs like MyCare, or any service paid with

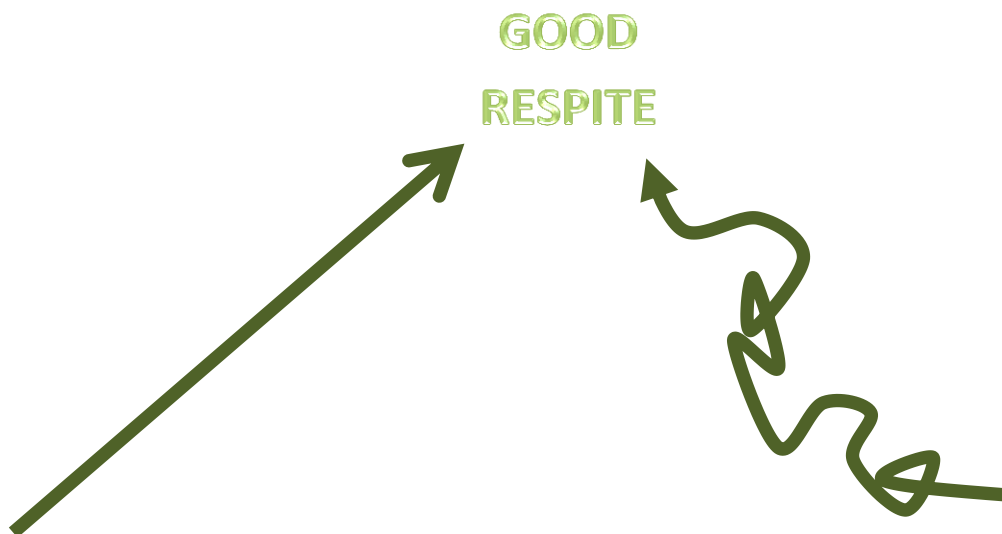


Medicaid Waiver or any other public funding. Can their SSI check be used to pay for respite or activities for your family member during your break?

List current or possible eligibility specific resources:

ACTION STEPS

Now you know what you want with respite and you have mapped out your resources. What steps will you take to get you closer to getting that GOOD RESPITE you want and need? They don't have to be big steps but keep your eye on what you want and keep yourself moving in that general direction. Don't get discouraged. The trajectory toward your GOOD RESPITE might not be a straight arrow and it may look a bit sloppy. It doesn't matter so long as in the end you are closer to finding that GOOD RESPITE. Put your steps in writing and make notes to remember what you've done; what works; and what you learn along the way.





If you've completed this LifeCourse respite plan you should now have a better vision for GOOD RESPITE and you've identified the resources available to you. Don't depend on just one type of resource. A more satisfying life is often one that integrates all 5 areas of support. Look to technology, friends, family, the community, and within your own personal resources to get a break. You and your family member are unique so everyone will have a different mix of resources to use. MyCare was designed to help when you need financial assistance in order to get a break. Use the personal and community resources you've identified to get the breaks you need and if they

don't work or are not enough, MyCare funding can help fill in the gaps. Let us know how we can help you when you need MyCare vouchers.

We hope you find your GOOD RESPITE! Let us know how we can help.



Pony Bird

Family Support/MyCare
636-282-1414 | 636-933-3764

FamilySupports@ponybird.org

Service Coordination Offices

Developmental Disability Advocates
636-282-5510 | 636-937-6946

St. Louis Regional Office-(DMH) Crystal City
636-931-5720

Interested in learning more about Charting the LifeCourse?

1. Watch for webinars or in-person sessions from Pony Bird. Contact the MyCare office to see if there is anything planned or if they can provide you with more information. Webinars will be recorded and posted on the nextstepforlife.org &/or ponybird.org website (MyCare page) for viewing.
2. Visit lifecoursetools.com to find information, videos, and tools to help you with planning for the future or for problem solving all kinds of life's issues.