



In-Home Respite Tool Frequently Asked Questions – For Individuals and Families

Background:

In 2023, Senate Bill 138 required the Department of Developmental Services (Department) to address inequities in how respite services are provided to caregivers. The law states that this effort is intended to “provide more statewide uniformity and consistency and promote equity in the administrative practices and services of regional centers, consistent with the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act.” The law also requires all regional centers to adopt a statewide In-Home Respite Tool.

Goals for the In-Home Respite Tool are to:

- Create a simple, easy to use tool that provides consistency statewide.
- Reduce differences in authorizations among families with similar needs across the 21 regional centers.

Regional centers across the state have already tested a draft version of the tool. The Department hosted a public webinar to introduce the first version of the tool on April 10, 2025, as well as a 30-day public comment in August 2025. The service coordinator workgroup met twice after the tool testing to discuss, review and revise the draft tool. The Department also used feedback gathered from the public comment period to further improve the tool.

Together with Burns & Associates and Human Services Research Institute, our contractors, the tool revisions included:

- Simplifying language,
- Reducing text in the tool, thus shortening the tool in its entirety,
- Combining several sections of the tool, and
- Adjusting some response options and associated points.

These revisions made it necessary to test the tool once again to collect additional data for overall tool scoring analysis. The testing took place January 26, 2026 to April 30, 2026. The data collected will help determine the appropriate amount of respite hours that should be authorized once the tool is implemented. It also will help address individual instances where significant changes in respite service authorizations may be appropriate and inform an exception process for unique circumstances.

Q. What is the In-Home Respite Tool?

A. The tool is a statewide form that service coordinators will use to determine the number of respite hours to be authorized, based on need. The tool includes questions about the individual, the caregiver, and the family. Answers to these questions will determine the level of respite need. Service coordinators will complete the tool directly with individuals and families when the planning team, through the Individual Program Plan (IPP), identifies a need for respite.

Q. Is the In-Home Respite Tool finalized?

A. No. It is currently under development. The tool has been piloted with regional centers and gone through a public comment period. The tool was updated based on community feedback. It is going through another data collection period, which may result in additional changes to further improve or simplify the tool.

Q. When will the public be able to review the final In-Home Respite Tool?

A. The final tool will be available to the public on the Department's website prior to implementation.

Q. When is the In-Home Respite Tool expected to be implemented?

A. The regional centers will begin using the tool later in 2026. Prior to implementation, the Department will provide training and share information about the process.

Q. How will the In-Home Respite Tool affect the IPP development process?

A. The In-Home Respite Tool will be administered if the IPP identifies a need for respite. It will not replace or change the IPP process. During the IPP meeting, the planning team identifies what is happening in the individual's life, what is important to the individual, and lists all the individual's goals and future plans. The IPP will include a list of services and supports that the individual and the planning team agree will help the individual meet those goals, which may include respite.

Q. Will the In-Home Respite Tool determine a need for respite services?

A. The tool will not determine a need for respite services. The IPP and the planning team determine the services a person needs, which may include respite. The tool will determine the number of respite hours to be authorized, based on level of need.

Q. Some individuals and families feel that service coordinators ask for a lot of information, but do not consider the individual or family's needs when authorizing hours. How will the In-Home Respite Tool address individual and family needs?

A. The tool is designed to gather information about the individual and their needs, the family or caregiver's needs and caregiver stress level, and other life events. If all the questions are answered honestly or properly, the tool will be able to determine more accurately the amount of respite to be authorized.

Q. How will age be considered in the In-Home Respite Tool?

A. The tool accounts for the differing characteristics between a child and an adult. T

Q. How will the In-Home Respite Tool consider family responsibility to care for their own child?

A. Current law ([Welfare & Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 4646.4\(a\)\(4\)](#)) and regional center policies on family responsibility continue to be applicable.

Q. How does In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS) authorized hours impact the hours that will be authorized using the In-Home Respite Tool?

A. Current law ([WIC Section 4648\(a\)\(8\)](#)) and regional center policies on generic resources will continue to be applicable.

Q. Will the tool help to prevent regional centers from telling families they must use IHSS as a replacement for respite?

A. While the tool does not ask about use of IHSS, current law ([WIC Section 4648\(a\)\(8\)](#)) requiring that regional centers explore the availability and access of generic resources will continue to be applicable.

Q. Can the In-Home Respite Tool be completed with the family virtually?

A. Yes, the tool can be completed virtually if it is part of an IPP meeting and the individual/family has requested a remote meeting in accordance with current law.

Q. Once the tool is final and ready to use, is there a maximum/minimum number of hours that can be used?

A. The data collected and analyzed during the testing period will set the hour authorization amounts. An exception process in accordance with current law will continue to be available.

Q. Can individuals and families receive a copy of the In-Home Respite Tool?

A. Yes, individuals and families can receive a copy of the tool.

Q. Is the In-Home Respite Tool translated into other languages?

A. The tool is available in the following languages: English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Khmer, Farsi, Armenian, and Standard Arabic.

Q. How will the tool be administered to individuals/families who do not speak English?

A. Service Coordinators should follow regional center protocol for translation/interpretation, as needed.

Q. Will the In-Home Respite Tool identify the number of authorized hours?

A. Yes.

Q. Did this tool take into consideration infants who are provisionally eligible and are still in the early start program?

A. The tool can be administered if a need is identified in the Individualized Family Service Plan.

Q. How does this new tool work for families who share hours with siblings?

A separate tool must be completed for each individual.

Q. What if parents have 50/50 custody and both parents are interested in respite services? Which caregiver will complete the tool?

A. The regional center should include the parent who participates in the IFSP or IPP process. If both participate, it is advisable to have both involved in completing the respite tool. Service coordinators should follow regional center practices when determining how to distribute hours between the parents.

Q. Is it possible that after this is implemented an individual's hours would be reduced, or would it be used only for new requests or increases?

A. The Department will issue guidance to regional centers prior to implementation to address potential impacts to current service authorizations.

Q. Is there a place to identify if there is a sibling also requiring respite?

A. Yes, the tool addresses family situations with two or more individuals currently using respite care or requiring it, especially if one-on-one support is needed for each individual. A tool should be completed for each individual for authorization of respite hours.

Q. Will there be multiple tools for families that have multiple people utilizing respite?

A. Yes. Service coordinators must complete the tool for each family member receiving respite service.

Q. If a family is not currently using respite due to staffing shortages or other issues, is there a way to document why it has not been used?

Yes. Service coordinators will be prompted to explain the reason for authorized but not used respite services.

Q. If the respite provider is a family member, would they be listed as a natural support?

A. If a family member is paid to provide the service, they would not be included on the schedule as a natural support during the time they are being paid. If the same family member provides unpaid support some other time, those days and hours should be included as natural support on the schedule.

Q. Families might feel threatened when asked to justify their need for services in addition to their natural supports.

A. For many individuals, needs are not met through generic resources and/or natural supports. However, statute requires use of those resources and supports before assessment for other services and accessing regional center funded services. The service coordinator should ask questions in a caring and professional manner, where the individual and their family will not feel offended.