



What to expect from Adoption Helpers' In-Home Respite Care program:

This program was developed in December of 2023 to provide free quarterly respite care (babysitting) in four-hour increments to foster, adoptive, and kinship families in the Upstate.

If you want to volunteer in this way, here's how it works in a nutshell:

- Attend our 3 hour Volunteer Training*
- Complete CPR certification (virtual and free)*
- Clear a background check*
- Sign up for a respite date on the current quarter's respite schedule (shared via email)
- Receive the information on the family and other volunteer you'll be going on the visit with
- Show up on the date you signed up for, love on those kiddos, and have fun!

*only has to be done once

Volunteer Training:

We host trainings every quarter, either virtually or in-person. The three hour training covers the principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention, or TBRI® (See “What is TBRI” in the FAQ section below), as well as an introduction to Adoption Helpers and its various services. Once you’ve completed this one-time training, CPR certification (which will be provided to you for free if you are not already certified), and a cleared background check, you are certified to serve with in-home respite care, and any other AH services!

Community Event volunteers are not required to attend volunteer training, but are welcome to if they’re interested in learning about the principles of TBRI.

Family Intake Forms:

Once you’ve signed up for a respite visit, we send you the more detailed Intake Form that the family has filled out. This includes confidential information that is not to be shared outside of the approved individuals. You will have access to their form up through the date of your visit.

You’ll be able to read the form ahead of your visit to help prepare you for what to expect with each kid.

Cancellations:

In order to provide a consistent service for these families, we rely on our volunteers to come through after committing to a respite slot. However, emergencies do happen, so if something comes up and you can no longer go on a visit, please just contact Dara Lehman as soon as possible. The sooner you tell us the easier it will be to fill in with someone else to still give the family that date if possible. Otherwise we have to cancel the visit for the family if we do not have the volunteers in place.

It is not uncommon for a family to need to cancel their visit because of sickness, unexpected schedule change, or special family circumstances. In these instances, we always try and reschedule

Scheduling:

As the volunteer, you get to schedule yourself for the visits you are interested in! The respite schedule is broken up into quarters, you can serve as many or as few times per quarter as is your preference.

On our respite visit schedule, which is shared each quarter via email, you’ll be able to see each available date along with the following information on the family:

- Their last name
- The number and ages of each child that will be on the visit
- The city/area they are located in

Upon signing up, you’ll then receive more detailed information before the day of the respite visit, including exact address, the names of each child, their personality, general behavior, brief history, and any other specific information the parent would like to disclose.

that families respite date for later in the quarter. If a visit that you're signed up for gets cancelled, you'll be contacted immediately as well. When a reschedule date is selected by the family, that new date will also be shared with you!

Sickness Policy:

If you or someone you're in close proximity with has run a fever within the last 24 hours or been knowingly exposed to something contagious, please communicate that as soon as possible and we will postpone or rearrange the visit as needed. We have the same policy in place for the family in order to prioritize the health of everyone involved.

If anyone (volunteer or child) is getting over a sickness that's no longer contagious, we just ask for clear communication so that we can ensure everyone is comfortable with being in the home together.

If a child (or volunteer) becomes sick or starts running a fever while volunteers are there on a respite visit, inform the parent immediately so that the parents can return home.

Bed and Bath time policies:

On evening respite visits, we will very often take care of bedtime routines for the kids. We try and stick with their normal routine as much as possible, and it will be shared ahead of time as part of the family's intake form. Our volunteer policies around bedtime are:

- Never get in the bed with a child
- No male volunteers will handle bedtime for girls or for young kids (four and under)
- No male volunteers in girls bedrooms
- Assistance with changing clothes or going to the bathroom is only done when the child or the parent says that they need help, and always with another volunteer around. (Female volunteers only for girls)

We can not oversee bath time for the kids. If they need to be bathed or showered before bed, the parents are asked to do so before the respite visit starts.

We want to be sure and prioritize privacy, show respect to the parents and kids through our behavior, and err on the side of caution.

Volunteer Pairing:

Every visit will have a pair of volunteers going to the home together. For each first time family or first time in-home volunteer, you will be paired with either Dara or Laura from the AH Team for at least the first one. After that, you'll be partnered with the other volunteer(s) who choose to sign up for any given visit. Before going on a visit we'll make sure that the volunteers have one another's contact information and all feel comfortable with the arrangement. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable with the volunteer pairing, please communicate that with Dara and we'll adjust as needed.

FAQ:

How often do I go on home visits?

- As often as you would like! The schedule generally has 2-3 respite visits each weekend, so there's plenty of opportunity, but you are the one who decides how often you'd like to go. There is no expectation or requirement on how many you sign up for. Whether it's once a month, once a quarter, or even once a year, every visit counts for these families.

What do we do while we're there?

- short answer: play! Each visit is different, but the goal is to make the kids feel special and help them have a good time. We stick to their normal routine as much as possible, most evening visits will involve bedtime routine. Adoption Helpers orders in dinner (or lunch) for each visit so that the meal is provided, and we have a selection of board games that are available to bring into the home and play with on the visit. We always abide by the parent's rules while in their home, but try to make every effort to simply have a fun time with the kids in whatever they enjoy doing.

Will I be by myself?

- Nope. You'll go in with one (or sometimes two) other trained volunteers. We schedule the number of volunteers according to the number, ages, and needs of the children on a visit. The only situation where you'd go by yourself is if it is a family with one or two kids, you have already been on the visit before, and you, the parents, the kids, and Adoption Helpers all agree and feel comfortable with that arrangement. Most scenarios will be two volunteers going together.

What is TBRI?

- Trust-Based Relational Intervention® is the trauma-informed approach to caregiving that we base our caregiving structure around. Developed at TCU by Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross, it is a well researched, scientific, attachment based model that is used all over the world. It's principles of Connection, Empowering, and Correction are what we go over in our volunteer training and aim to apply through our volunteer services.

Can I get community service for this?

- Yes! If you need community service hours, each visit is eligible for 4 hours. Send your forms to or reach out to Dara to confirm your hours.

Will I go to the same family each time?

- It depends...ideally, we would like for the same volunteers to return to the same families each quarter. Consistency helps build felt safety and connection, so when possible we would like for each family to see the same few volunteers each quarter instead of a new person every time. Realistically that cannot always happen, so it is not a guarantee. But when a family repeats their signup, we'll reach out to those who've gone on their visit before as first priority sign up.

What happens if something goes wrong?

- If you're on a visit and something goes wrong, you will always have the phone number of the parents as an emergency contact. Additionally, we'll make sure you have phone access to either Dara or Laura (if they are not on the visit with you) to call if you need guidance for any specific situation. And of course, do not hesitate to call 911 if you are ever in an emergency situation of any kind.

Are there male volunteers?

- Yes! Most of our In-Home Respite team is female volunteers, but there are a few males as well. All volunteers undergo the same training and screening.
- There are different guidelines however surrounding male volunteers, such as:
 - The visits we permit male volunteers to sign up for are selective
 - No male volunteer will ever go on a visit by themselves
 - Bedtime for girls or kids 4 and under, and any diaper changes cannot be handled by a male volunteer.
- We always verify with the parents (and with the other volunteer) to make sure they're comfortable with a male volunteer on the visit

Have a question that didn't get covered? Please reach out to
dara@adoptionhelpers.org

Thank you for serving with us!!