

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Strengthening Caregivers.
Expanding Respite.
Supporting Wisconsin.



RCAW
Respite Care Association
of Wisconsin

www.respitecarewi.org

Executive Summary

To promote, support, and expand statewide respite care across the lifespan: We make respite happen!

Overview

Respite Care Association of Washington (RCAW) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1986 with a steadfast commitment to enhancing access to high-quality respite care across the state. Our lifespan respite care programs are designed to identify, coordinate, and expand respite care options for families caring for individuals of all ages, abilities, and medical needs, ensuring no caregiver is left without support.



434

GRANTS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS AWARDED

91,759

FACEBOOK VIEWS

33,220

HOURS OF RESPITE CARE

“HMHM helped me quickly put healthy meal kits in the oven while caring for my child post cardiac surgery.”



2025 Board of Directors

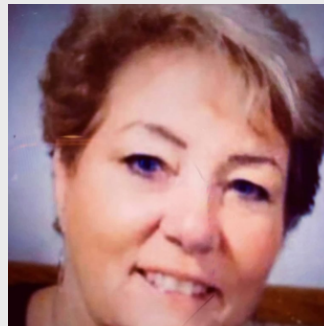
RCAW's Board of Directors supports RCAW's mission, comprising caregivers, care recipients, legislators, professionals, and advocates. This leadership team brings lived experience and statewide expertise to our work.



Executive Committee



Tricia Lazare
President
Inclusa



Vicky Gunderson
Vice President
Acumen Fiscal Agent



Kathy Platt, RN
Treasurer
Retired
Respite Care Advocate



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Prader-Willi Homes

Karl Schoendorf

La Causa, Inc.

Lee Snodgrass

Wisconsin State Legislature

Danielle Tolzmann

Family Voices of Wisconsin

Kim E. Whitmore, PhD, RN, CPN

Ujima United, LLC.

Training

RCAW offers a comprehensive set of free training courses that strengthen Wisconsin's respite workforce and support family caregivers. These self-paced programs include the **National Respite Care Provider Training (NRCPT)**, **Bringing Respite to Your Community (BRYC)**, and specialized **KIT (Knowledge, Ideas, Tools)** courses that build practical skills and statewide competencies. Together, they prepare learners to deliver high-quality respite and create a pathway to join the Wisconsin Respite Care Registry.

544 Learners

Completed the National Respite Care Provider Training



85 Completions

Bringing Respite to Your Community (BRYC)



241 Requests

National Respite Care Provider Training Toolkit



96 Providers

Listed on the Wisconsin Respite Care Registry



RCAW's training ecosystem remains **robust, accessible, and widely utilized**, with hundreds of caregivers completing structured learning and many more engaging with specialized courses. This sustained participation reinforces RCAW's role as a statewide leader in caregiver education and workforce development.

StartUP Grants & Coop TA Grants Awarded in 2025



StartUP

Respite Grant Program

Funds for new respite care programs



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192 Families Served

“Caregivers have shared the relief they experience knowing their loved ones have access to social opportunities they may not otherwise be able to provide, describing *Discovering Pathways* as a safe, comfortable, and trusted space.”



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Journey Church (Racine, Milwaukee, Kenosha Counties): Piloted an inclusive respite program for adults with disabilities, offering sensory-friendly engagement and caregiver relief. The pilot will guide expansion to additional campuses and age groups.

Discovering Pathways (Walworth County): Launched a person-centered respite program with flexible support options and new caregiver groups. The investment expanded high-quality respite access and strengthened caregiver wellbeing in Walworth County.

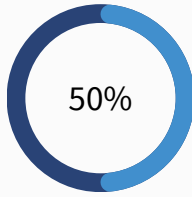
Quality Care Preference (Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Washington, Walworth Counties): Advanced a scalable in-home respite model supporting individuals with complex needs and reducing caregiver strain. Growth through Medicaid partnerships and a lean franchise strategy is increasing regional capacity.

Yellow Hearts Adult Day Center (Milwaukee County): Developed a daytime adult respite program offering structured, enriching support for adults with disabilities. The center is expanding high-quality respite options for families in Milwaukee County.

Bayfield Care Cooperative – CoOp Technical Assistance: Bayfield County, an overwhelmingly rural region, is addressing a critical shortage of in-home caregivers by developing a worker-owned home care cooperative.

Full Circle Respite - CoOp Technical Assistance: Full Circle Respite supports neurodivergent adolescents ages 5 to 25 through tailored skill-building, emotional growth, and healthy relationship development. The program will operate as a worker-owned cooperative, based in a rented facility in Winnebago County, with outreach to surrounding rural communities.

Mental Health Crisis



50% of all emergency respite awards were issued to prevent or respond to a mental health crisis.

1,700 Hours

Emergency respite funding supported caregivers in **13 counties**, helping families manage sudden crises without losing stability at home.

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

SE Wisconsin had the highest volume of emergency awards, particularly in **Milwaukee County**, while the **Northern** and **Northeastern** regions also relied on emergency support for mental health and medical crises.

QUANTITATIVE DATA FROM IMPACT SURVEYS

Emergency respite improved emotional, financial, social, physical, and occupational wellbeing for caregivers, with 95% reporting significant stabilization during crisis.

- **100%** reported improvement in at least one wellness domain
- **95%** reported improvement in three or more domains
- **81%** reported improvement in five or more domains of wellness
- **100%** said the emergency respite funds helped them stabilize their situation

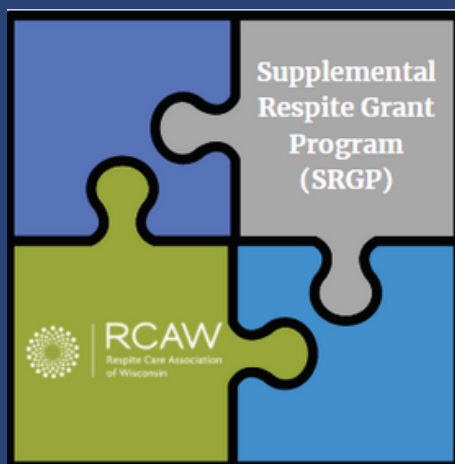
Emergency Respite: Meeting Urgent Needs Statewide

In 2025, the Caregiver Respite Grant Program provided emergency respite support across 13 counties in all 5 regions, responding to urgent caregiver crises ranging from medical emergencies and mental health needs to abuse, neglect, and funeral-related stress.

Investing in respite care prevents costly crises, avoiding emergency room visits, protective-services interventions, hospitalizations, and job loss, making it one of the lowest-cost, highest-return supports available to Wisconsin caregivers.

Respite Grants for Family Caregivers

434 Grants Awarded in 2025



154 CRGPs Awarded

"I actually only used four hours of my grant as my mother passed away during the grant period. The impact was substantial however. Being awarded the grant made me feel like the broader community saw me and my mother. That you understood what we were both going through and were there to support us. It cut through my social isolation. And the anticipation of respite lightened my heart considerably."

74 HMHMs Awarded

"The healthy meals grant helped me order healthy meal kit delivery service so I could quickly put it in the oven instead of going to the store and taking care of extra add ons while taking care of my child post cardiac surgery."

196 SRGPs Awarded

"This is one of the programs that literally helps me breathe the most. I look forward to getting a little bit of extra help and support every 90 days."

Family Caregiver Impact Data

| Wellness Domain | Percentage of Family Caregivers Reporting “YES” to “ <i>Did RCAW grant funds positively impact your X wellness?</i> ” |
|-----------------|---|
| Emotional | 96% |
| Financial | 88% |
| Social | 84% |
| Spiritual | 74% |
| Occupational | 80% |
| Physical | 84% |
| Intellectual | 75% |
| Environmental | 80% |

Caregivers reported meaningful improvements across all areas of wellness after receiving respite support. Emotional wellness rose the most, with many describing renewed clarity and relief. Financial and physical wellness improved as grants eased daily pressures and allowed time for rest and essential tasks. Social, spiritual, and environmental wellness also strengthened as caregivers reconnected with others and reduced stress at home. Even modest support helped caregivers stay steady, healthy, and able to continue providing care.

2025 Wisconsin Respite Summit

SEPTEMBER 16, 2025



Listening to caregivers:
Data and stories driving supportive change

RCAW hosted the **2025 Wisconsin Respite Summit**, bringing together caregivers, care recipients, community partners, policymakers, and professionals to address the urgent need for accessible, high-quality respite care. Centered on the theme **Listening to Caregivers: Data and Stories Driving Supportive Change**, the Summit focused on using lived experience and measurable outcomes to guide policy, improve services, and strengthen advocacy statewide. Attendees spent the day sharing stories, exploring policy updates, and learning practical strategies to elevate caregiver voices and drive meaningful change.



The 2025 Wisconsin Respite Summit was an incredible success. Thank you to Julie Strenn, *Strategy and Program Development Director*, and Elevance Health for their generous sponsorship, which made it possible to offer the Summit at no cost to participants. Julie guided attendees through four thought-provoking world café questions that sparked rich conversations, and the feedback gathered will be shared with her team to support continued learning. RCAW is grateful for Elevance Health’s partnership and Julie’s leadership in advancing respite care across Wisconsin.



Janet Zander, *Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator* at GWAar, for an insightful Summit session that highlighted key legislation affecting Wisconsin’s family caregivers, including Caregiver Designation, Volunteer Driver Insurance, and SB 152. Janet’s update strengthened our understanding of the policy landscape and the opportunities ahead. Every attendee also received access to GWAar’s Advocacy Toolkit, equipping them with clear resources to elevate caregiver voices in Madison.



Thank you to Kim Whitmore, Ph.D., RN, CPN, for facilitating workshops during the 2025 Wisconsin Respite Summit. Participants learned how caregiver stories can shape policy, funding, and services, and explored how measurable outcomes strengthen programs and demonstrate impact. These sessions equipped caregivers and professionals with practical tools to advocate effectively and improve support for families.

In 2025, RCAW's Group Respite Grant Program awarded **8 grants** totaling **8,521 hours of respite care** to **258 family caregivers** and supported organizations across Wisconsin in providing on-site respite during caregiver-focused events. These grants allowed caregivers to attend support groups, trainings, and community activities while care recipients received safe and meaningful support. Programs reached rural families, tribal communities, veterans, and multigenerational households, serving participants through education, recreation, and inclusive engagement statewide.





Lisa Schneider
Executive Director
Joined RCAW February 2017



Rachel Watkins-Peteren
Assistant Director
Joined RCAW February 2019



Leslie Thede
Program Manager
Joined RCAW October 2020



Kelly Lamberty
Program Support Specialist
Joined RCAW October 2023



Sara Sass
Office & Accounting Manager
Joined RCAW September 2024