



System of Care Advisory Council

**SB1197 – 4/9/25 Public Hearing
Youth & Parent initiated respite services**

Problem

- As anyone who has cared for a child knows, parenting is the hardest job, and all parents need a break from caregiving.
- As anyone who was ever a teenager knows, sometimes you just need a break from your parents or caregivers.
- While many parents are able to find respite through day care, after school programs, grandparents and hired babysitters, families caring for youth with complex needs are often not afforded the same luxury.
- Youth with complex needs are often unable or not allowed to take breaks from caregivers when they need them, and have to wait for their guardians to initiate respite services. Asking for respite from a caregiver can feel scary – causing guilt or shame for youth who just need to take some space from their parents.
- Too many families are excluded from these “traditional” forms of respite. They hear things like “we can’t safely care for your child”, “I don’t feel comfortable caring for your child”.
- Respite is one of the most commonly requested services among youth and families and the most frequently reported barrier by our regional System of Care partners.
- The need for respite has been elevated in a variety of state and national reports over the past decade, including:
 - [U.S. Surgeon General Advisory on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Parents \(2024\)](#)
 - [Special Master Report - Dr Marty Beyer \(2024\)](#), and
 - [OHA Ombuds Program \(2023\)](#)
- Oregon is behind the curve in investing in respite programs. Many states have been utilizing Medicaid waivers for years to provide respite to families with complex needs.

Process

- In response to this unmet need, SOCAC led an effort to assess respite already available in our state and challenges of accessing it.
- We heard about many barriers, including rigid funding models that restricted eligibility and access, lack of culturally and linguistically responsive workforce, stigma, confusion about what respite is, why it's important and who it's for, and lack of youth-initiated options for respite.
- This resulted in a list of recommendations co-created with over 150 youth and family members who we engaged in surveys, listening sessions and policy driven workgroups.
- SB1197 is a direct outcome of this work and what we heard was needed from youth and families, both those who have been able to access respite, and those who needed it and didn't receive it.

Benefit

- Respite is an evidence-based prevention strategy that improves family stability and reduces caregiver stress and utilization of higher cost, out of home settings like emergency departments and residential placement.
- Although this request comes at a time of budget uncertainty and constraints, Oregon's families can't wait for this service any longer.
- Our work to transform Oregon's System of Care is reliant on ensuring families can access this relief, so that they can take a break, and return with renewed energy to the hardest job there is.