Operational Guidelines on
Day Respite Service for Persons with Disabilities

(1) Introduction

All rehabilitation service units subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) must make use of designated places or casual vacancies to provide respite services for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Respite services, including day respite service (DRS) and residential respite service (RRS), are community support services that aim to provide temporary care for PWDs[1], allowing their carers to take a break and relieve their caring stress, thereby encouraging and helping PWDs to live in the community.

Rehabilitation service units providing DRS include Day Activity Centres (DACs), District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities (DSCs), Care and Attention Homes for Severely Disabled Persons (C&A/SDs), and private residential care homes for PWDs (RCHDs)[2] participating in the Bought Place Scheme (BPS). A list of these service units is available on the SWD Website.

[1] PWDs include persons with intellectual disability, physical disability, hearing impairment, visual impairment, and persons in mental recovery.

[2] Some private RCHDs have designated RRS places. These places may be utilised to provide DRS when vacancies arise.

(2) Target Service Users

The target service users of DRS for PWDs are –

(1) PWDs aged 6 or above[3]; and
(2) those who are willing and suitable for communal living.

Applicants are not required to undergo assessment under the "Standardised Assessment Mechanism for Residential Services for People with Disabilities", but the level of care required should commensurate with the nature and scope of services provided by the respective type of service units.

(3) Service Provision

Respite services may be used on a recurrent basis, with each service period normally not exceeding 14 consecutive days, so as to encourage more PWDs in need to use the services. Depending on the applicant's needs, the service unit may extend the service period to a maximum of 42 consecutive days. If a service user requires a longer period of respite service under special circumstances, the service unit should consult the SWD.

[3] Some service units only admit PWDs aged 15 or above.

(4) Service Hours

The service hours of DRS provided by various rehabilitation service units are as follows:

Service unit*	Service hours
DAC	Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
DSC	Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
C&A/SD	Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Private RCHD under BPS	Monday to Friday, normally from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

* Some service units provide extended service hours for DRS.

Application Procedures

(1) PWDs and/or their carers may directly approach the relevant service units for enquiries and applications, or through referrals made by social workers of Medical Social Services Units, Integrated Family Service Centres, special schools, rehabilitation service units or Designated Hotline for Carer Support (Carer Hotline).

(2) PWDs and/or their carers may apply in advance for DRS six months before the actual service date. Service units will register the cases and assess the needs of service users to facilitate early preparation. To support PWDs and their carers with urgent needs, service units shall arrange immediate DRS placements whenever vacancies are available.

(3) No medical examination is required for receiving respite service in day rehabilitation units, except for respite services provided in residential care homes.

(5) Fees and Charges

DRS is charged at $5.1 per hour, while meal fees range from $15 to $18 per meal (applicable to C&A/SDs and private RCHDs under BPS)[4].

(6) "Vacancy Enquiry System for Respite Services/Emergency Placement" (Enquiry System)

The SWD sets up the online Vacancy Enquiry System (https://www.ves.swd.gov.hk/en) to facilitate convenient access for individuals in need/referring social workers to check the availability of respite service vacancies at any time.

Service units shall proactively update the vacancy information on the Enquiry System in a timely manner (within one working day) to ensure applicants/referring social workers have access to accurate information.

(7) Points to Note

To ensure that PWDs and their carers receive appropriate support, all service units should take note of and comply with the following guidelines:

(1) **Streamline the application procedures as far as possible**, for example, by conducting telephone or video-call assessments to avoid the need for a prior in-person meeting with the applicant;

[4] If service users have any special personal care needs, service units should charge the additional care items on an actual cost basis, and must comply with the relevant guidelines on fees and charges.

(2) **Applicants for day rehabilitation units are not required to undergo medical examinations**, nor should they be required to undergo additional examination (such as chest X-rays). RCHDs providing DRS, should proactively provide necessary assistance to applicants who experience difficulties in completing medical examinations, so timely services could be provided. In urgent or special circumstances that medical examinations cannot be conducted prior to admission, RCHDs should first provide DRS, and then arrange for the examination to be completed within three days after admission. Service units may also review the medical records of applicants through records in the Electronic Health Record Sharing System. Justifications should be provided, and prior approval from the SWD must be obtained if additional examinations beyond the basic medical examination are required;

(3) **Provide regular training to frontline staff** to ensure that they can respond to enquiries in a friendly and professional manner, and provide accurate information, including the number of vacancies, application procedures, and service details;

(4) **Promptly update vacancy information on the Vacancy Enquiry System for Respite Services/Emergency Placement** to ensure that applicants/referring social workers receive accurate information;

(5) **Optimise the use of designated places and casual vacancies**[5] to provide respite services;

(6) **Keep proper records of all application information**, as well as records of applications processed, accepted or rejected by the service units;

[5] Temporary vacancies from long-term care services in day rehabilitation units/RCHDs can be released for providing respite services.

(7) **Establish a pre-registration mechanism** for applicants to complete registration procedures in advance, and set up a waiting list for respite services so that waitlisted applicants can be notified immediately when vacancies arise, thereby ensuring full utilisation of vacant service places;

(8) **Arrange transport for service users**. Service units that have their own vehicles should, as far as possible, provide escort services for respite service users. For service units without their own vehicles, they should **proactively seek assistance from Carer Hotline 182 183** to provide transport subsidies and/or escort services for service users in need; and

(9) Step up the publicity and promotion of respite services by regularly **organising on-site visits and experiential activities in collaboration with district organisations/service units** so as to enhance carers' understanding and confidence in respite services. This will also allow PWDs to familiarise themselves with the respite environment in advance, and encourage them to make use of respite services.

Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch

Social Welfare Department

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