

Definitions of Innovative and Exemplary Respite Services

Best-practice, and evidence-based practice, are considered to be the gold standard for health, education, therapeutic and social services. These practices and standards help assure excellence and accountability to those we serve.

While we all strive to implement best- and evidence-based practices, those approaches rely in part on funding sufficient to support high standards of care, and research and evaluation that establish effectiveness and worth. Although caregivers often site respite services as their highest priority, sufficient and sustained funding remain challenging to individual respite services and systems.

Despite this challenge, individual respite programs and services across the country create, refine and sustain exemplary and innovative practices. The documented successes of these services and programs increases the likelihood that others will recognize the meaning of respite in human terms as well as the importance and worth of respite. And as we grow in our understanding of what exactly makes respite programs and services exemplary, we can replicate them, in whole or in part, increasing the likelihood that respite services come closer to our aspirations for excellence. Any one program's success is increased manifold when we all learn from that success and understand how to repeat it for the benefit of caregivers and care recipients.

What do the terms *Exemplary* and *Innovative* mean? ARCH defines these terms, and recognizes respite programs and services, based upon these six characteristics.

1. **Demonstration of Positive Outcomes.** Exemplary respite services are supported by research or evaluation evidence and have shown benefit(s) to family caregivers. They may also have demonstrated benefits to care recipients, families and society. Innovative respite services document or plan to document at least one family caregiver outcome and create a novel approach to respite, or approaches adapted for a specific community or population.
2. **A Written Plan with Goals and Objectives.** Exemplary and innovative programs or services specify goals and objectives that are observable and measurable. Exemplary programs or services set performance targets based upon established evidence. Innovative programs and services set performance targets that may be modified based upon data collected during day-to-day practice.

3. **A Program or Service Manual or Guide.** Exemplary and innovative programs or services follow written policies and procedures in their day-to-day activities that allow them to monitor fidelity and minimize drift from their stated goals and objectives. Exemplary programs and services guides are sufficiently detailed to allow program replication. Innovative programs or services may not yet have developed a formal manual, but have written protocols or checklist sufficient to guide essential program activities.
4. **Person- and Family-Centered Services.** Exemplary and innovative programs or services document culturally sensitive and responsive procedures and assure that caregivers guide their own choices regarding respite services, and that the respite services are meaningful for the care recipient. Exemplary and innovative programs or services assure that family caregivers and/or care recipients have purposeful roles on the program's advisory board or in some other advisory capacity.
5. **A Professional Development Plan.** Exemplary and innovative programs or services ensure that volunteers and paid personnel are trained, coached and supported so that they can competently and confidently follow program policies, protocols, and procedures required for the respite services they offer. Exemplary and innovative programs or services carefully screen volunteers and paid staff to ensure the highest safety standards for families.
6. **A Plan for Collecting and Evaluating Data.** Exemplary programs or services have a performance measurement plan for measuring consumer satisfaction, service implementation/model fidelity, and at least one participant-focused outcome, and they regularly collect data for each of these. Innovative services, at a minimum, have plans to collect at least one participant-focused outcome and regularly monitor their program to make sure services are implemented according to guidelines and protocols. In addition, Exemplary also regularly review data, use data to make informed decisions about programs and services, and share data with staff, consumers and stakeholders. Exemplary programs and services also conduct a formal internal or external evaluation documenting outcomes and effects in writing.

The services selected by ARCH for recognition may demonstrate practices that are exemplary, innovative or both. It is expected that all recognized services will have the potential to contribute to the knowledge base that will guide expansion and replication of much needed quality respite services.