

ABOUT THE SIBLING SUPPORT PROJECT

The Sibling Support Project, believing that disabilities, illness and mental health issues affect the lives of **all** family members, seeks to increase the peer support and information opportunities for brothers and sisters of people with special needs and to increase parents' and providers' understanding of sibling issues

What Are Sibshops?

When a child has a disability or becomes ill, the entire family is affected. Sibshops provide support and guidance to siblings of children with special medical or developmental needs. Siblings are encouraged to share the challenges and celebrate the joys with brothers and sisters in similar situations.



Sibshops are lively, action packed, 2 hour workshops that celebrate the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Sibshops acknowledge that being the brother and sister of a person with special needs is for some a good thing, for others a not-so-good thing, and for many, something in between. They reflect a belief that brothers and sisters have much to offer one another – if they are given a chance. The Sibshop model mixes information and discussion activities with new games (designed to be unique, off-beat, and appealing to a wide ability range), and special guests. There are currently more than 200 Sibshops across the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

The Goals of Sibshops

- ❖ **Goal 1:** Sibshops will provide brothers and sisters of children with special needs an opportunity to meet other siblings in a relaxed, recreational setting.
- ❖ **Goal 2:** Sibshops will provide brothers and sisters with opportunities to discuss common joys and concerns with other siblings of children with special **needs**.
- ❖ **Goal 3:** Sibshops will provide siblings with an opportunity to learn how others handle situations commonly experienced by siblings of children with special needs.
- ❖ **Goal 4:** Sibshops will provide siblings with an opportunity to learn more about the implications of the special needs of their brothers and sisters.
- ❖ **Goal 5:** Sibshops will provide parents and other professionals with opportunities to learn more about the concerns and opportunities frequently experienced by brothers and sisters of people with special needs.

What will a Sibshop Session Look Like?

- Getting to know each other activities
- Fun activities to include – t-shirts, crafts, snacks, energetic games and creative art projects
- Special Presenters
- Friendship making opportunities
- A place to be with other Sibs who “get it”
- A take home item that shows the uniqueness of being part of a “Sibshop”
- The ability to join at any time, but regular attendance is most beneficial

Who Runs Sibshops?

Sibshops are run by a team of people who have professional and, in some cases, a personal understanding of the impact a child’s illness or disability can have on family members. For Pikes Peak Sibshops, the team includes Ms. Julie Hudak-Salvat, LCSW, and Ms. Linda Ellegard, MA, along with enthusiastic volunteers.

Ms. Hudak, is a credentialed Sibshops facilitator. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, in private practice in Colorado Springs for the past 12 years; specializing in working with children with various complex developmental and emotional needs. She completed a clinical fellowship at the JFK Center, and The Children’s Hospital in Denver. This experience enabled her the opportunity to work with many other disciplines, deepening her understanding, and her skills in working with children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Throughout this work she saw the need for sibling support and hoped that she would someday make Sibshops a reality in Colorado Springs.

The sponsoring organization for Sibshops is Special Kids Special Families. The mission of this non-profit organization is “to promote, strengthen and support individuals with disabilities and their families”. Linda Ellegard, MA, Executive Director for the organization says, Sibshops fits perfectly with our mission to provide supports to the family members, and Sibshops gives siblings a voice to their unique life experience. Bringing Sibshops to Colorado Springs opens the door to increased understanding and connections that siblings of special brothers and sisters can experience within and outside of their family unit. This program is invaluable to our children. Special Kids Special Families offers lifespan services and supports to families with a special needs family member.

Where do I get an Application Packet?

You can contact Special Kids Special Families at 719-447-8983 Ext 19 and request that an application be mailed to you; or you can visit our website at www.SKSFcolorado.org and download an application.

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