



## Sibling Support Project

Dear colleague,

Thank you for considering workshops from the Sibling Support Project!

We see our workshops and trainings as having multiple benefits. Here are just three:

- Sibshops—a unique service in most communities--get started. School-age sibs connect with peers (usually for the first time) and form friendships that can provide a lifetime of support.
- Parents and service providers turn their attention to the issues faced by brothers, sisters, and other traditionally overlooked family members. This discussion will change the way parents look at all of their children and how service providers look at the families they serve.
- Adult brothers and sisters connect with their peers to offer fellow sibs validation, support, and information—and explore the creation of much-needed adult sibling initiatives.

I look forward to working with you to bring our workshops to your community. Please let me know if I can answer any questions along the way.

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## *Workshops Offered by the Sibling Support Project*

**T**hroughout their lives, brothers and sisters will share many—if not most—of the same concerns that parents of children with special needs experience, as well as issues that are uniquely theirs. With the exception of the child’s mother, no one in the family spends more time with children who have special needs than do brothers and sisters. And, because the sibling relationship is usually the longest-lasting relationship in a family, brothers and sisters will likely be involved in the life of the child who has special needs longer than anyone—including the child’s parents.

For the sake of everyone—brothers, sisters, parents, providers, and *especially* the family member who has special needs—siblings and their concerns must not be ignored.



In the pages that follow are descriptions of workshops conducted by Don Meyer, director of the Sibling Support Project and creator of the Sibshop model. As you’ll see, Don is asked to conduct workshops and trainings on a variety of topics, including:

- How to create a community-based Sibshop
- Keynotes and workshops on sibling issues
- Demonstration Sibshops
- Workshops for adult sibs, fathers, and grandparents of people with special needs

### *And here’s what workshop participants will learn:*

- ✓ What to do about the concerns often experienced by brothers and sisters: peer issues, resentment, loss, and concerns about the future (just to name a few!)
- ✓ How to increase the unique opportunities often experienced by siblings, including compassion, advocacy, insight, and tolerance
- ✓ Strategies to decrease siblings’ concerns and increase their opportunities
- ✓ How to help your agencies provide “sibling-friendly” services
- ✓ How to plan and run Sibshops, the award-winning, kid-friendly mix of peer support and recreation

We’ll change the way your agency thinks about the families you serve—and provide your staff with easy-to-implement programs that convey your concern!

# Training on the Sibshop Model

Don is most frequently asked to conduct local, regional, and statewide trainings on how to start a Sibshop. In case they are new to you, Sibshops are pedal-to-the-metal celebrations of the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Sibshops acknowledge that being the brother or sister of a person with special needs is for some a good thing, others a not-so-good thing, and for many, somewhere in-between. They reflect a belief that brothers and sisters have much to offer one another—if they are given a chance. Sibshops are a spirited mix of new games (designed to be unique, off-beat, and appealing to a wide ability range), new friends, and discussion activities. Don has conducted Sibshop trainings in every state as well as Canada, England, Ireland, Japan, and New Zealand, resulting in the creation of over 260 Sibshops worldwide.

The two-day Sibshop training is one event with two goals and two audiences.

**The primary goal is to train new Sibshop facilitators and administrators—that is, adult sibs, service providers, parents, and others want to learn how to run a local Sibshop.** During the two days of the Sibshop training, they’ll learn about sibs’ life-long concerns, find out how to organize a local Sibshop, and experience what a Sibshop is all about as they join Don and local young brothers and sisters for a four-hour Demonstration Sibshop. Sibshop facilitator trainees must attend both days of the Sibshop training. Upon completion of the two-day training, they are considered “first-generation” Sibshop trainees and may (upon registration) start their own local Sibshop.

**The secondary goal is to educate parents, service providers, and others about sibs’ ever-changing issues across the life-span.** This is an audience interested in sibling issues, but not necessarily interested in how to run a Sibshop. This audience attends the first day of the two-day training.

Below is a schedule for a typical two-day Sibshop training, followed by a description of the component workshops:

	<i>Component Workshops</i>	<i>Parents, service providers, adult siblings</i>	<i>Sibshop facilitator trainees</i>	<i>School-age brothers and sisters of children with special needs</i>
<b>Day One:</b>				
<b>9:00—12:00</b>	Brothers and Sisters of People with Special Needs: Unique Concerns, Unique Opportunities	X	X	--
<b>1:00---2:30</b>	A Panel of Adult Brothers and Sisters	X	X	--
<b>2:45—4:00</b>	Sibshops: Getting Started	Optional	X	--
<b>4:00—6:00</b>	<i>(Optional)</i> Adult Sibling Event	X		
<b>Day Two:</b>				
<b>9:00—10:00</b>	Preparation for Demonstration Sibshop	--	X	--
<b>10:00—2:00</b>	Demonstration Sibshop	--	X	X
<b>2:00—3:30</b>	Debriefing and planning for local Sibshop programs	--	X	--



### *Sibshop Training, Day One:*

#### *Brothers and Sisters of People with Special Needs: Unique Concerns, Unique Opportunities.*

This core workshop uses a lively large-group discussion format to help participants learn about the concerns and opportunities frequently experienced by brothers and sisters of people with special needs. During this workshop, participants share what they have observed in their families or the families they serve. Participants also learn what researchers, clinicians, and siblings themselves say about growing up with siblings who have special needs. Implications for parents and service providers will be discussed throughout the workshop.

#### *A Panel of Brothers and Sisters.*

One of the best ways to learn about sibling issues is to listen to the “real experts.” During this workshop, Don Meyer will moderate a panel of local adult brothers and sisters who will discuss life with siblings who have special needs. We’ll cover it all: the good parts, the not-so-good parts, and everything in-between. Along the way, panelists will offer suggestions to parents and providers.

#### *Sibshops: Getting Started*

Sibshops are kid-friendly workshops as rewarding to run as they are to attend. During this workshop, participants will learn the logistics of planning and implementing a local Sibshop for school-age brothers and sisters. We’ll review considerations including: collaborating with other agencies, defining the population you wish to serve, identifying financial resources, characteristics of good Sibshop facilitators, finding a place to hold your Sibshop, how frequently to conduct your Sibshop, and getting the word out to parents and providers. We’ll also discuss Sibshop goals and the recreational, discussion, and educational activities these goals suggest. Finally, we’ll sample an activity or two!

#### *Adult Sibling Event (Optional)*

Let’s face it: most adult sibs rarely have opportunities to connect with others walking down a similar path. As adult sibs often attend Sibshop trainings, training sponsors sometimes host an informal event just for them at the end of the day. A glass of wine and a few nibbles can add to the camaraderie--and this event can be a great way to kick off a statewide adult sibling effort!

### *Sibshop Training, Day Two:*

#### *Demonstration Sibshop*

Participating in this workshop is the very best way to learn about what Sibshops are all about. During the Demonstration Sibshop, participants will put on their jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers to join Don Meyer as he conducts a Sibshop for 12 to 20 8-to-13 year old local brothers and sisters. This workshop provides participants with the materials and know-how they will need to start, plan, and conduct the activities for their own first Sibshop. The Demonstration Sibshop can also be the “kick-off” for an on-going program in the host community. Following the Sibshop, trainees will debrief and finalize plans for creating Sibshops in their own communities.



# Keynotes and workshops on sibling issues, Sibshops, and workshops for adult sibs, fathers, and grandparents of people with special needs

Along with the two-day Sibshop training described above, Don is often asked to present keynotes and workshops on issues pertaining to brothers and sisters, fathers, and grandparents of people with special needs.

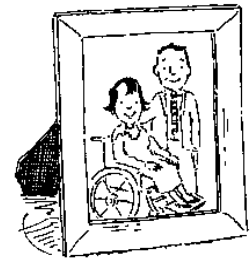
## Workshops for and about siblings of people with special needs:

### *Brothers and Sisters of People with Special Needs: Unique Concerns, Unique Opportunities.*

This core workshop uses a lively large-group discussion format to help parents, adult siblings, and service providers learn about the concerns and opportunities frequently experienced by brothers and sisters of people with special needs. During this workshop, participants share what they have observed in their families or the families they serve. Participants also learn what researchers, clinicians, and siblings themselves say about growing up with siblings who have special needs. Implications for parents and service providers are discussed throughout the workshop. This workshop is often presented as an interactive keynote (*Suggested length: 1½ to 3 hours*)

### *A Panel of Brothers and Sisters.*

One of the best ways to learn about sibling issues is to listen to the “real experts.” During this workshop, Don Meyer will moderate a panel of young adult and adult brothers and sisters who will discuss life with siblings who have special needs. We’ll cover it all: the good parts, the not-so-good parts, and everything in-between. Along the way, panelists will offer suggestions to parents and providers. (*Suggested length: 1½ hours*).



### *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: a workshop for adult sibs only*

Most parents can’t imagine raising a child with special needs without having opportunities to share their unique joys and concerns with other parents in a similar situation. Yet, incredibly, many siblings reach adulthood without ever having a chance to “check in” with other sibs. During this workshop adults sibs will discuss the wide range of opportunities and concerns they faced growing up, those they face now, and those they will likely face in the days to come with their peers. (*Suggested length: 1 ½ to 3 hours*)



### *Demonstration Sibshop*

Increasingly, agencies and organizations hosting state, regional, national, and international conferences wish to offer workshops for young typically-developing brothers and sisters--and ask Don to conduct a two- to four-hour Sibshop. These events are a spirited mix of games, discussion, camaraderie, information within a lively, recreational context. They’re a great way to let young sibs know we appreciate the many contributions they make!

## Workshops for and about fathers and grandparents

As the author and editor of publications such as Uncommon Fathers, The Fathers Program, and Grandparent Workshops, Don Meyer has a long-standing interest in the concerns of other frequently overlooked family members. Here are brief descriptions of workshops he is often asked to conduct.



### *Fathers Only Workshop*

This workshop is based upon the belief that fathers have the potential to be each other's best resources. By sharing experiences and interests, participants help all the group members develop a broader understanding of the joys, concerns, and challenges that are a part of being a father of a child with special needs. (*Suggested length: 1 ½ hours*).

### *Grandparents Only Workshop*

Like dads, grandparents of children with special needs have much to offer one another—that is, if they're given a chance. During this workshop grandparents will share their joys, observations, and concerns with other grandparents. Past workshop participants say doing so helped them put their family's experiences into a broader perspective. Along the way, we'll brainstorm ways that grandparents can effectively support their children and grandchildren. (*Suggested length: 1 ½ hours*).

### *Fathers and Grandparents of Children with Special Needs: Too important to ignore*

During this workshop, we'll discuss fathers' and grandparents' unique concerns. We'll also learn about two easy-to-implement models of providing support for these all-too-often overlooked family members. This workshop is primarily intended for service providers and those wishing to start groups for dads and grandparents. (*Suggested length: 1 ½ hours*).

### *Panels of Fathers (or Grandparents) of Children with Special Needs*

Like the sibling panels described earlier, panels of fathers or grandparents are a potent way to educate service providers and family members about the important (but often undervalued) roles played by these family members. Panelists will offer insights and suggestions to parents and providers. (*Suggested length: 1 ½ hours*).

## About Don Meyer

Don was a founder of the SEFAM (Supporting Extended Family Members) program at the University of Washington, which pioneered services for fathers, siblings, and grandparents of children with special needs.

Don has been the director of the Sibling Support Project since 1990 and has conducted more than 300 workshops worldwide, educating parents and providers on sibling issues and the Sibshop model. Because of his trainings on the Sibshop model, there are now over 330 Sibshops in eight countries.

Don is the senior author of curricula including *Sibshops: Workshops for brothers and sisters of children with special needs*; *The Fathers Program*; *Grandparent Workshops* and the children's book *Living with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs: a Book for Sibs*. He also edited *Uncommon Fathers: Reflections on Raising a Child with Special Needs*, a collection of nineteen essays by fathers of children with various special needs and *Views from our Shoes*, an illustrated collection of 46 essays by young brothers and sisters. *The Sibling Slam Book: What it is really like to have a brother or sister with special needs* was written with the help of eighty-one 13-19 year-old brothers and sisters. His most recent book is *Thicker Than Water*, a collection of thirty-nine essays by adult siblings of people with disabilities.

News organizations that have featured Don and his work with brothers and sisters include the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *National Public Radio*, and ABC News' *Nightline*, *World News Tonight*, and *20/20*.

Evaluations consistently attest to Don's energy, commitment, and ability to motivate audiences to look at families in a new way.

## About the Sibling Support Project



Most of the five million children with disabilities and chronic health impairments have brothers and sisters. Despite a clear need for services and considerations, many brothers and sisters grow up without resources—such as access to support programs and sources of information—that would help them in their roles.

Since 1990, the Sibling Support Project has been a national resource dedicated to the well being of brothers and sisters of people with special needs. From the beginning, the Sibling Support Project has sought to make programs and services for brothers and sisters as readily available as Parent-to-Parent Programs are for parents.

Our primary goals are:

- 1.) to increase the availability of peer support and education opportunities for brothers and sisters of children with special health and developmental needs throughout the United States and
- 2.) to increase parents' and providers' understanding of sibling issues and their implications.

To accomplish these goals, project staff:

- conduct workshops for parents and providers on the life-long issues facing brothers and sisters
- provide specific training on how agencies can start their own community-based Sibshop
- create awareness materials (e.g., curricula, children's books, websites, articles) for parents, service providers, and brothers and sisters
- provide technical assistance to those starting a local Sibshop
- host a website and two no-cost international listservs (SibKids and SibNet) dedicated to sibling concerns and
- maintain a database of over 300 Sibshops and other sibling programs across the United States.

# Comments about our workshops from family members and service providers....

Hearing about siblings' experiences was extremely useful, but Don's enthusiasm rekindled and touched the part of me that wanted to make things possible. An amazing weekend, so thought provoking, great company, such honesty from all ages—it took you to all sorts of places emotionally. Don is a truly amazing guy, so motivating, easy to listen too—the time just flew. *Service provider*

A very worthwhile weekend and the way Don presented it was amazing and the time passed very quickly. After listening to Don and the other siblings, I found a lot of my feelings from my childhood resurface as if it were yesterday, but I was able to put a better perspective on things. Support for siblings is a topic very close to my heart—it's great to see that it is happening and there will be even more. *Sibling*

What a great workshop. Don you have a great gift with children and as a speaker. It is exciting that you put so much energy into siblings. You have inspired me to set up something for our sibs. *Teacher*

I've felt understanding, happiness, sadness, and grief all in one day. Thank you for so much awareness! I've left happy! *Mother*

Don is an amazing speaker—could listen to him all day. *Service provider*

Lots of food for thought. Most I will be able use as a parent and support person. Thank you for reminding us we have grandparents too! *Mother*

Great clarity, terrific humor. Passion for topic and compassion for people. Respectful handling of audience's questions. Great anecdotes interspersed with heaps of valuable information. And the sibling panel was excellent and their stories quite moving. *Father*

It was great meeting you and to learn first hand about your work and Sibshops which I found extremely interesting. The professionalism of your presentation made the two days fly--an opinion I know was shared by all who attended. I particularly noted you validated people's pain in such a way that it gave them strength - i.e. they were definitely not left hanging. *Mother, service provider*

Don is one of the most organized presenters you could ever ask for! This is a tremendous support system for families. *Conference organizer*

Thank you for the opportunity to enhance my understanding and with sincerity, humor, and genuine care and feeling. There was a wonderful sense of group care and sharing. Young folks shared their feelings with genuineness and compassion. *Grandfather*

I didn't realize I was in for such a "rich" day. *Sibling*

I spent chunks of the day with a lump in my throat. Having to go home and relay the information to my husband and the grandparents was daunting—so thanks for the notes! They were marvelous. *Mother*

Absolutely inspiring presentation—I want to become a Sibshop facilitator! *Teacher*

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View the Sibling Support Project's Online Training Calendar at

<http://plus.calendars.net/sibshop/>

