



## University of Washington Survey: Positive Results of Sibshops Last into Adulthood

Many visitors to our website already know about Sibshops--lively peer support and education programs for school-age brothers and sisters of kids who have special needs. The Sibling Support Project has been helping local agencies start Sibshops for quite a while, and many of the sibs who attended Sibshops as kids are now adults—and some of them are assuming increasingly active roles of their adult sibs who have disabilities.

For years, we've wondered whether involvement in Sibshops would have a long-term impact on participants' relationships with their sibs. From comments we had from Sibshop "grads" and their parents, it appeared that it did, but until recently, we didn't have any research to confirm our observations.

In the spring of 2005, University of Washington colleagues Amanda Johnson and Susan Sandall conducted an online survey of Sibshop grads (ages 18-34, n=30) and there's lots of good news to share. Here are just a few of their findings<sup>1</sup>:

- Over 90% of the respondents said Sibshops had a positive effect on the feelings they had for their siblings;
- Sibshops taught coping strategies to over two-thirds of respondents;
- Three-fourths reported that Sibshops affected their *adult* lives; and
- 94% said they would recommend Sibshops to others.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, A. B., & Sandall, S. (2005). Sibshops: A Follow-Up of Participants of a Sibling Support Program. University of Washington, Seattle

The authors state that the *“results show that many aspects of the Sibshop program appeared to serve as protective factors for siblings of individuals with disabilities, a population who is frequently considered at-risk”* and the *“study shows that these positive results last into adulthood.”* The study concluded, *“The positive effects of the Sibshop program are not only apparent, but enduring.”*

Of course, those of us who have run Sibshops know that they are meaningful to the kids we serve. We can tell by the amazing comments Sibshoppers make during discussion activities, the fast friendships they form with other participants who “get it,” or when kids choose Sibshops instead of skiing with friends. But it is great to have the validation provided by a study such as this.

Also, we have long contended that the biggest beneficiaries of Sibshops are likely to be the sibs who have disabilities. If we support typically developing sibs as they grow up, we increase the chances that they will elect to remain lovingly involved in the lives of their brothers and sisters with disabilities as adults. To learn that 75% said that Sibshops had an impact on their adult lives is gratifying indeed!

Besides the apparent long-term impact, Sibshop coordinators at local agencies tell us that Sibshops reflect their commitment to family-centered services and are and are a great way to attract young families. If you’d like to bring Sibshops to your community, please give us a call or drop us a line. We’d be happy to help in any way we can.

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