

Massachusetts group dedicated to siblings of people with disabilities

By John Kramer

Growing up with a brother or sister with a disability, whether the disability is mental or physical, seen or unseen, is a unique, challenging, and potentially rewarding experience.

Siblings of people with all types of disabilities face unique concerns across the lifespan. Without adequate information and support, young siblings can feel confused by the attention given to their brother or sister with disabilities; as they age into adult siblings, they can feel overwhelmed by caregiving responsibilities that were previously managed by

parents. We believe that an early and solid foundation of support for siblings helps them develop into well-adjusted adults who can advocate effectively alongside their brothers and sisters with disabilities well into the future.

The Massachusetts Sibling Support Network (MSSN) is a network of adult siblings, parents of young siblings, mental health and medical professionals, educators, and sibling service providers within Massachusetts. We have been listening to the concerns of Massachusetts siblings and are committed to supporting siblings in

with disabilities

Siblings of all ages have needs, many of which can be met by sibling support services. Services for adult sibs range from therapeutic discussion groups to practical guidance on financial planning. Young siblings often benefit from recreational support groups where they have an opportunity to play with children who share the common experience of growing up with a brother or sister with disabilities. The MSSN website provides a resource list of sibling services and Sibshop groups across the state, and we serve as a conduit to connect families to these resources.

The MSSN is pleased to offer two educational presentations: "Future Planning is a Family Affair" is an introduction to future planning issues, and "No Sibling Left Behind" offers information on the sibling experience, strategies for supporting siblings, research on siblings, and the growing sibling movement.

We welcome those who are interested in sibling issues to join us. For more information about the Massachusetts Sibling Support Network or to join our mailing list, please visit www.masiblingsupport.org or call 617-807-0558.

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the following ways: creating welcoming communities for siblings across the state; improving the range and availability of sibling support services; and educating others about issues faced by siblings across their lifespan. We are the only organization in Massachusetts specifically focused on supporting siblings of people



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