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# Lifelong Needs of Siblings

— Colleen Williams —

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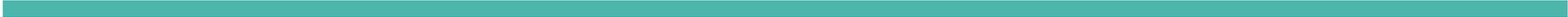
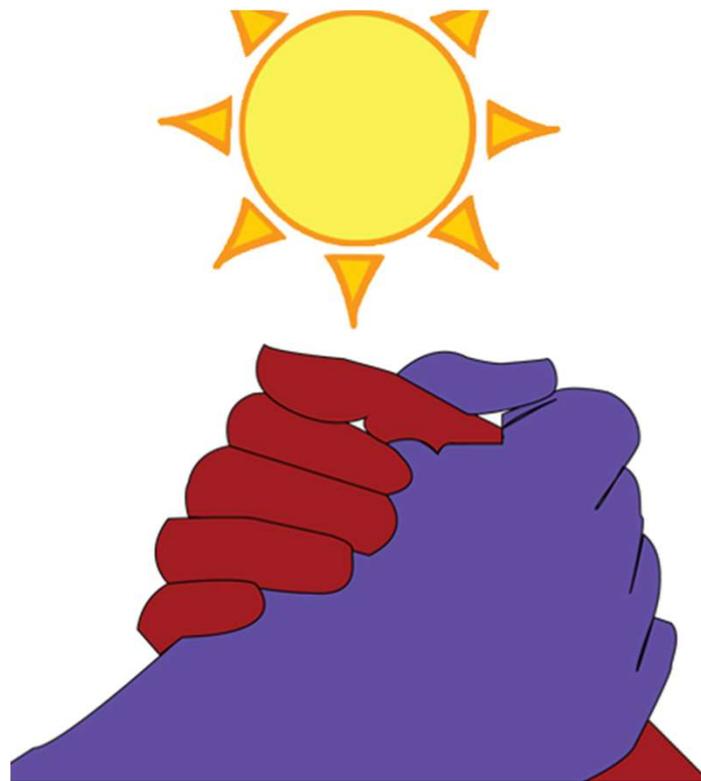
# About Me

- Project Lead for Texas Sibling Network
- Grew up in San Antonio, family currently lives in Lubbock
- Sister to Steven
- Second oldest sister of five kids



# What is The Texas Sibling Network?

- The Texas Sibling Network is for adult siblings by adult siblings.
- The Network provides support, resources, leadership, and advocacy skill building opportunities for siblings. It is recognized that siblings have very different experiences and visions and the aim is to provide a community to welcome and honor those experiences.



# Why do Siblings Matter?

- Siblings are the longest lasting relationship in an individual's life. Siblings play an important role in supporting their siblings with disability throughout their lifetime
  - Siblings are peers and thus uniquely positioned to support their siblings
  - Siblings are often overlooked by service providers. Family support usually means the parents and the child with a disability. Why aren't siblings being included in family support?
  - Most adult siblings anticipate having a caregiving role in their sibling's life. How are we planning for the future right now?
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## Sibling Needs in Childhood

- ❑ Developmentally Appropriate info about their sibling's disability
  - ❑ Info to respond to questions from other people about their sibling's disability
  - ❑ Guidance on how to include their siblings in play
  - ❑ Quality time alone with parents
  - ❑ To meet peers who are also siblings (Sibshops!)
  - ❑ Strategies for addressing bullying of their siblings or themselves
  - ❑ Adults at school and home who are interested in hearing what they have to say
  - ❑ Explanation between the potential differences in expectations and rules between themselves and their sibling with a disability
  - ❑ Professional support when appropriate
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# Sibshops

Sibshops are fun filled workshops for siblings ages 8-12. TSN offers them here in Austin every other month. Sibshops give siblings a place to meet other people who “get it” and have a space that is just for themselves. We believe that there are some good, not so good, and so so things about being a sibling but at the end of the day being a sibling is a strength that we want to celebrate and support.



# Sibling Needs in Teen Years

- ❑ Increasing information about their sibling's disability
- ❑ Opportunities to spend time alone with friends
- ❑ Time alone with parents
- ❑ A chance to play a role other than caregiver in their family
- ❑ Opportunities to talk with their family about their questions about the future
- ❑ Role models to teach them how to advocate with their siblings
- ❑ Trusted peers who understand their concerns
- ❑ Invitation to provide input into the IEP
- ❑ Learn how to address guilt around their siblings
- ❑ Space and guidance to plan for life outside of the family (leaving to go to college, readjusting adults roles in the family, etc)

## Sibling Needs in Adult Years

- ❑ Spaces to address concerns about future planning and future responsibilities, including discussions about partners and their roles in the family.
- ❑ Discussions about raising their own children and considering heritability of disabilities. These conversations are often not only medical but often emotional.
- ❑ Guidance on how to navigate the “system” of services and support related to their brother or sister’s disabilities.
- ❑ To learn how to support their brother or sister with disabilities live a self-determined life.
- ❑ Support for the issues of grief and loss – how to support your sibling when parents die; how to support yourself in grief; the loss of a brother/sister.
- ❑ Increased support for the transition of caregiver roles shifting.
- ❑ Support for managing life across state lines from your brother/sister.

## Who can help meet these needs?

- Parents
  - Teachers
  - Trusted family members and friends
  - Peers with similar life experiences
  - Professional counselling when needed
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## Contact Info

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