Sibling Support Resources for Families of Neurodivergent Individuals

Santa Clara County / South Bay Focus

Resource report prepared for internal review • September 2026

Executive Summary

A review of sibling-support resources identified a range of options for siblings of Neurodivergent individuals, from recreational peer-support programs for children and teens to statewide networks and professional resources for adult siblings. The strongest established model identified is Sibshops, a peer-support approach developed specifically for siblings of children with developmental and health-related support needs. Sibshops are designed to combine connection, information, discussion, and recreation rather than function as therapy.

For the Santa Clara/South Bay area, the most actionable resources identified are the national Sibling Support Project and its Sibshop model, CaliforniaSibs/Sibshops West, and CaliforniaSibs' adult-sibling community and professional directory. Local program availability should be confirmed directly with each organization because schedules and locations change.

1. What Sibling Support Can Look Like

Siblings of Neurodivergent people may benefit from having a space that is specifically for them—not simply a parent support group or a general autism program. Effective sibling programming can provide:

- Peer connection with others who understand the sibling experience.
- A place to discuss both positive and difficult aspects of having a sibling with support needs.
- Age-appropriate information about disability, services, family roles, and future planning.
- Opportunities to develop coping, communication, and self-advocacy skills.
- A strengths-based, wellness-oriented environment that does not assume siblings are struggling.
- A pathway to additional professional support when a sibling needs more than peer support.

2. Sibshops: A Key Model to Consider

The Sibling Support Project describes Sibshops as lively, recreational peer-support and educational events for siblings of children with disabilities and health concerns. The model began in 1982 and has since been adopted in communities in the United States and internationally.

Sibshops are intentionally different from therapy. The model uses games, art, discussion, information, and peer interaction to give siblings an opportunity to meet others with similar experiences. The Sibling Support Project states that Sibshops are intended to provide peer support and information in a recreational context and use a wellness approach.

The model is particularly relevant for an organization considering a structured sibling program because there is an established curriculum, standards of practice, facilitator training, and a registration process. The national organization reports that more than 550 Sibshops exist across states and other countries.

3. Resources Identified for Santa Clara County / Bay Area

CaliforniaSibs / Sibshops West

CaliforniaSibs is the California chapter of the Sibling Leadership Network. Its Sibshops West program serves siblings ages 8–18 and groups participants by age/grade. The program currently emphasizes a virtual format and states that its virtual Sibshops are free. CaliforniaSibs also maintains statewide resources, meetups, and a professional directory.

Best fit: children and teens; also useful as a statewide connection for adult siblings.

CaliforniaSibs Adult Sibling Community

CaliforniaSibs provides information, support, advocacy resources, and opportunities for adult siblings of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The organization reports Bay Area presence and virtual events, and maintains a professional directory that includes therapists, coaches, and other providers serving siblings.

Best fit: adult siblings and families planning for long-term support/advocacy.

Sibling Support Project

The national Sibling Support Project provides the Sibshop model, online sibling communities, publications, workshops, and facilitator training. Its online communities include resources for teen and adult siblings. It also provides a directory of registered Sibshops.

Best fit: locating established programs or exploring development of a program locally.

4. Online and Adult-Sibling Options

For adult siblings, local children's Sibshops may not be appropriate. The Sibling Support Project maintains online communities for siblings across the lifespan, while CaliforniaSibs provides adult sibling community-building, virtual and in-person meetups, advocacy resources, and a professional directory. These options may be especially useful for siblings who are beginning to think about future caregiving, family roles, or long-term planning.

5. Potential Service Gap / Opportunity

The resources reviewed suggest a distinction between established sibling programming for children and teens and the less consistently available local opportunities for adult siblings. This may represent an opportunity for a local organization to provide a sibling-specific offering, particularly if families are requesting support close to home.

A local program could be structured as a peer-support group, a Sibshop-style recreational program, an adult sibling discussion group, or a combination of sibling education and support. If the organization wanted to use the Sibshop name and model, the Sibling Support Project requires facilitator certification and registration.

6. Recommended Next Steps for Organizational Review

1. Determine the primary population: school-age siblings, teens, adult siblings, or multiple age groups.

2. Contact CaliforniaSibs/Sibshops West to confirm current enrollment, upcoming dates, age groups, and whether any Bay Area in-person opportunities are available.
3. Contact the Sibling Support Project to identify currently registered Sibshops in or near Santa Clara County.
4. Assess whether families are seeking peer support, education, therapy, or a combination; keep those functions clearly differentiated.
5. If developing a new program, consider the Sibshop model and facilitator training as a possible framework.
6. Consider a referral pathway to individual/family therapy for siblings whose needs exceed the scope of peer support.

7. Key Considerations

- Sibling support should be age-appropriate. A format that works for an 8-year-old is not necessarily appropriate for a teenager or adult.
- Participation should not presume that a sibling is distressed. Sibshops explicitly use a wellness and strengths-based approach.
- Sibling programs should address both the meaningful and challenging parts of the sibling relationship.
- For adult siblings, future planning, advocacy, family roles, and connection with other adult siblings may be especially relevant.
- Program schedules and local availability can change; direct confirmation with providers is recommended before making referrals.

8. Sources & Further Information

Sibling Support Project — National sibling-support organization and Sibshop model.

https://siblingsupport.org/

Sibling Support Project – Sibshops — Program description, directory, and model information.

https://siblingsupport.org/sibshops/

Sibling Support Project – Standards of Practice — Standards and scope of Sibshops.

https://siblingsupport.org/the-sibshop-standards-of-practice/

CaliforniaSibs — California sibling network, adult sibling resources, and community information.

https://www.californiasibs.org/

CaliforniaSibs – Sibshops — Sibshops West information and age ranges.

https://www.californiasibs.org/sibshops

Sibling Leadership Network – State Chapters — California chapter and statewide network information.

https://siblingleadership.org/about-the-sibling-leadership-network/state-chapters/

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