

# Building a Multigenerational Family Movement

## Why should family groups make an effort to better include siblings?

- ✓ Siblings have a unique perspective and relationship with their sibling with an intellectual disability that comes from being a peer, often having shared friendship groups, attending school together, and more.
- ✓ Siblings are the most consistent supporter for their family members with intellectual disabilities throughout their lives, and their relationship with their sibling evolves as they age.
- ✓ Siblings often become the primary supporters for their family members with an intellectual disability as parents age, and they are best prepared to do this when they have been engaged in the family movement, have a strong understanding of the rights of their family member, and are aware of the resources available to them.
- ✓ The family movement cannot be fully representative of the needs of families without understanding the role that siblings play!

For family movements to fully represent and advocate for the needs of family members and of people with intellectual disabilities, family organisations must engage siblings. Some examples of ways to engage siblings include:

### Sibling peer support

Many family organisations have family support groups that exist at the local level - these are spaces where family members can come together, share experiences, give and receive advice and support, and provide psychosocial support to each other. Typically these groups are made up primarily of parents, but many Inclusion International members report a growing need for psychosocial support and mental health support among siblings as well.



### Family groups can engage siblings better by:

- ✓ Proactively inviting siblings to participate in peer support spaces
- ✓ Creating dedicated sibling support groups
- ✓ Considering dedicated psychosocial support and mental health awareness for siblings

### Developing sibling-inclusive resources

When family groups create resources for family members, these typically reflect the experiences of parents and are directed primarily towards parents.



### To make the tools being created for families more useful for the whole movement, family groups should reflect the sibling lens on resources they are developing by:

- ✓ Creating a system to review new family resources being produced to ensure they do not only reflect the parent perspective - family groups can create a list of questions to reflect on to think about who the resource speaks to and if siblings will see themselves in the content.
- ✓ Create content and resources specifically for siblings, including on how to engage in advocacy

## Co-facilitation in trainings and advocacy

The family movement needs to reflect on whose voices are being presented to new families joining the movement - parents are typically in the lead for support and referral with new families, but co-leadership of parents and siblings makes the movement more welcoming to siblings and invites more siblings into the space.



### Family groups can:

- ✓ Use a joint facilitation model for trainings and awareness raising, where trainings are delivered together by one parent facilitator and one sibling facilitator
- ✓ Elevate the voices of siblings in advocacy alongside parents and ensure the advocacy reflects both perspectives

## Encouraging sibling leadership in decision-making

A more representative family movement means leadership roles are held by a diverse group of families, including siblings.



### Strategies for doing this vary based on the type of organisation, but some strategies for doing this include:

- ✓ Creating leadership training opportunities for siblings
- ✓ Actively consulting siblings on high-level decisions
- ✓ Reserving seats on Boards or other leadership groups for siblings

## Engaging siblings in support and awareness trainings

Training delivered by family groups for families is common - they often cover topics such as the human rights of persons with intellectual disabilities, how to give good support, and the community support and services that are available for people with intellectual disabilities to access. These trainings are often targeted at parents, with siblings rarely getting access to the same training opportunities or information, which leaves them unprepared for delivering support at different stages of their life.



### Family groups can:

- ✓ Reserve spaces in awareness and capacity building trainings for siblings
- ✓ Create sibling-specific trainings that equip siblings with the knowledge they need to give good support at different times in their lives, from youth through to taking on a permanent primary supporter role
- ✓ Create resources for siblings and parents to prepare for a transition in support and manage the change together

Through engaging siblings, family groups will find themselves with a stronger and more sustainable multi-generational movement, with access to new spaces and ideas that come from sibling involvement, and with a more representative voice for families.

## Your turn: Building a Multigenerational Family Movement

**How else can family groups better include siblings?**

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