

# Sibling Support Programs



At Very Special Kids we recognise the importance of providing support for all family members. The Very Special Kids Sibling Support Program has been designed to meet the needs of siblings with a brother or sister who is living with a life-threatening condition or who has died.

*'If we support the whole family, we are supporting the person with special needs. Surely children...will progress much further when both parents and siblings are able to feel competent and emotionally supported, and the whole family can function in a positive, caring manner.'*

## What the Sibling Support Programs offer

All programs are based on a variety of themes and involves activities designed to create a space for the siblings to express their thoughts and feelings or simply to feel a sense of connection with other siblings.

- Sibling Days
- Bereaved Sibling Days
- Small therapeutic groups for siblings
- Adolescent Days
- Adolescent Weekend
- Young Person Advisory Committee

## Aims of the programs

- To provide a friendly and relaxed environment in which siblings can interact and experience a unique sense of belonging.
- To provide networking opportunities for siblings to relate their common and shared experiences.
- To facilitate a creative program, which enhances self - esteem.
- To provide a, safe and supportive environment in which siblings can express their feelings and thoughts.
- To celebrate the individuality of each child.
- To provide the siblings with an opportunity to have some fun and some time out

## Sibling Program

The Sibling Program welcomes all primary school aged children aged 5-12 years who have a brother or sister with a life threatening condition.

The program is held at Very Special Kids in Malvern. The day program is held during the April, July and September school holidays.

## **Bereaved Sibling Program**

The Bereaved Sibling Program welcomes all primary school aged children who have had a brother or sister die from a life-threatening condition. The day program is held during the April, July and September school holidays.

## **Adolescent Sibling Program**

The Adolescent Sibling Program welcomes all adolescent siblings aged 12-20 years, including those who are bereaved. The program involves one weekend at an external venue (two nights) and with an option for a second camp later in the year, as well as one day or evening activity during the year. The Young Person Advisory Committee is an opportunity for adolescent siblings to contribute to the Very Special Kids program and direction for future programs and support options for siblings.

## **Who facilitates the Sibling Support Programs?**

Two members of the Family Support Team facilitate each program with assistance from trained Family Services volunteers.

## **Booking into a Sibling Support Program**

Activities are advertised in 'Special Lives' and 'Continuing Links' and flyers are sent to siblings or to the whole family via email. Please contact your Family Support Practitioner or the VSK Support Line to be included on the mailing list.

## **Counselling**

In addition to activity-based programs, families can access counselling for individual siblings from members of the Family Support Team. Parents can also contact the team to discuss issues of concern about their children.

## **What siblings have to say about the Sibling Support Programs**

'I enjoy making new friends. I can't wait for the next sibling day'.

'I really valued getting to know different people and being able to talk to people that have been through the same thing as me'

'It was awesome and I especially liked making the gingerbread men and playing with the other kids'.

## **For Further Information:**

Please contact your Family Support Practitioner or the Very Special Kids Support Line on 9804 6253 or visit the website on [www.vsk.org.au](http://www.vsk.org.au) for further information about the range of sibling support services available.