

## **SIB TIPS FOR HOLIDAY FAMILY ENJOYMENT**

**The holidays can be full of joy as well as stress. Siblings of people with disabilities can play a role in helping their brothers and sisters enjoy the holidays.**

**Here are some tips to help lessen the stress and increase the joy for the whole family.**

- **Avoid the expectation of perfection! There are very few examples of a perfect holiday, in any family. Be reassured that we are all doing the best that we can.**
- **Help your brother or sister identify and communicate parts of the holidays that they enjoy the most. Are there traditions and rituals that they look forward to?**
- **Encourage your family to think about how your sibling's strengths and talents can be recognized and included in holiday events. There are so many parts of a successful holiday that can be inclusive – wrapping presents, measuring ingredients, picking a family movie...**
- **Many of our brothers and sisters appreciate their schedules and routines. To the extent that you are able, communicate what can be expected about potential changes. Calendars, pictures, and reminders about family gatherings and cancelled programs may provide reassurance.**
- **Similarly, consider schedule changes for those who support our siblings. Staffing commitments, caregiver schedules and family events impact schedules.**
- **Do you have big family gatherings with people that you don't see often? Some siblings like to review photos of people who will be at their parties.**
- **Identify triggers in advance! Big crowds, loud music, crowded spaces, and travel can impact everyone differently. Consider ways that your sibling finds comfort when it becomes too much. Some examples include bringing a comfort item, wearing headphones, using coloring materials, or designating a quiet space.**
- **Think ahead about food. Delicious food can be a big part of celebrating. It is hard to watch others enjoy foods when one's diet is restricted. When possible, prepare some preferred food options.**
- **Support siblings to make choices that provide a good experience. This could be wearing a favorite outfit, singing a favorite song, or sitting in a favorite spot.**
- **You can use these tips too! All family members are interested in enjoying the holidays! It is important to take care of our own emotional and physical needs.**
- **Turn to trusted friends and resources like the Sibling Leadership Network, SIBS, and Sibnet on Facebook to provide information and support.**

**This tip sheet was developed by the Sibling Leadership Network in partnership with Supporting Illinois Brothers and Sisters with an investment of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities.**

