



# About SuperSibs

## → Injury, illness, and hospitalization are tough on everyone in a family, including siblings.

The siblings may have to adjust to new schedules, routines, and caregivers, periods of separation from their hospitalized brother or sister and caregivers, and more responsibility at home. A hospitalization also creates a rollercoaster of emotions for every family member.

RJ Super Sibs is about providing emotional support to siblings after a brother or sister has been hospitalized due to injury or illness. Siblings receive comfort, encouragement and positive attention through a series of mailings, support groups, and 1:1 sessions. RJ Super Sibs is free for all siblings of inpatient families between the ages of 3 and 18.

## → It is easy to become an RJ Super Sib.

Referral forms are available with Child Life, reception, and the unit secretaries. The referral form asks for basic demographic information such as family contact information and birthdates. The RJ Super Sibs program is not only limited to or meant only for siblings who are currently experiencing distress; we believe all eligible siblings benefit from support during the patient's hospital journey.

After a sibling is enrolled in to the RJ Super Sibs program, the child's caregivers receive an introductory "toolkit" outlining the program. The toolkit also offers tips on talking about injury, illness, and hospitalization with siblings, family, and teachers.

## → Children enrolled in RJ Super Sibs receive mailings over the length of the patient's hospitalization.

These mailings may consist of:

- A welcome kit, an RJ Super Sib certificate and a fun surprise
- Twice monthly workbooks with fun activities and age-appropriate advice on managing stress and difficult emotions.
- Birthday cards and small gifts



- Small prizes to remind them that they are important, special and loved
- Information about RJ Super Sibs support group, Family Fun days, and additional sibling specific events

**Thank you for providing this critical support to siblings during a difficult time, so they can face the future with courage and hope!**

## About Siblings of Hospitalized Children

Depending on the age of the child, a variety of reactions and behaviors may be observed.

### Infants (0-12 months)

- Primary caregiver absence may leave the child feeling scared and unsafe.
- Infants 6-12 months may exhibit separation anxiety from caregivers. Your child may become upset when a primary caregiver leaves.
- When visiting a sibling in the hospital, an infant may become scared by new equipment, people, and noises.

### Toddlers (1-3 years)

- Separation anxiety from primary caregivers may be exhibited in the form of protesting, crying, or screaming during separation.
- Stranger anxiety is seen in children this age. Your child may become upset around new or unfamiliar people. You may see crying, whining, or clinging to a primary caregiver. Toddlers may begin to regress (ex: wetting the bed, speaking less, or throwing more frequent tantrums).

### Preschoolers (3-5 years)

- Your child may have misunderstandings about why their sibling is in the hospital and what their sibling is experiencing at the hospital.
- Your child may be fearful of becoming sick or “catching” their sibling’s illness.
- Your child may exhibit jealousy due to the increased attention focused on the ill sibling.

### School-Age (6-12 years)

- Your child may have misunderstandings regarding their sibling’s hospitalization and treatment.
- Your child may feel guilty that he/she may have caused or could have prevented their sibling’s illness.
- School-aged children may begin to fear that their sibling may never get well and come home.
- Your child may feel left out or forgotten due to the increased amount of time spent with the hospitalized child.

### Adolescents (13-18 years)

- Adolescents may begin to fear consequences of their sibling’s illness such as death or disability.
- Your child may display anger or resentment towards the ill sibling and their hospitalization.
- Adolescents may display increased engagement in risk taking behaviors and may act out at school or home.

**RJ SuperSibs’ goal is to help siblings feel recognized, remembered, included and empowered.**