

# MARGARET W. NEAL, L.C.S.W.

3400 CENTRAL AVENUE, SUITE 310  
RIVERSIDE, CA 92506-2181  
CA LICENSE # LCS9622

Phone: 951-275-5200  
[www.margaretwneal.com](http://www.margaretwneal.com)

## **REMEMBERING THE NEEDS OF THE SIBLINGS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS: Tips for Parents**

- 1) **BE CAREFUL OF LETTING THE SIBLINGS BE HELPERS** to the extent that they take on adult responsibilities and worries.
- 2) **HELP YOUR CHILDREN TALK ABOUT THEIR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND QUESTIONS** about having a sister or brother with special needs. Your local library will likely have children's books that will facilitate this process.
- 3) **GIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BROTHER OR SISTER'S DISABILITY.** This can develop increased understanding of the needs and behavior of their sibling with special needs.
- 4) **BE CAREFUL OF THE AMOUNT OF ATTENTION GIVEN TO YOUR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.** Allow times where the needs of the sibling come first. Your child without special needs may appear to be getting along just fine. But they will often hide or deny their own needs as a way to prevent giving you another burden. Even though your time is limited, find opportunities for one-on-one time.
- 5) **KEEP YOUR FAMILY ROUTINE AS NORMAL AS POSSIBLE.** Schedule family activities that involve all family members. Remember to invite others into your home. Be sure to eat meals together.
- 6) **ALLOW THE SIBLING WITHOUT SPECIAL NEEDS TO BE PART OF DECISION-MAKING,** when possible.

- 7) **SOMETIMES ALLOW THE SIBLING TO JOIN IN ON MEDICAL AND THERAPY APPOINTMENTS** with your child with special needs. This can increase understanding and family bonding.

*Margaret W. Neal, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in Riverside, CA. Her work focuses on "helping children and their parents." For more information, visit Margaret's website at [www.margaretwneal.com](http://www.margaretwneal.com).*