

Voices from the Field: Kate Boone



Q1: How were you involved in your brother's therapy or other special services?

I am three years older than my brother, Matt. He had a severe speech disability when he was young and I would go with him to speech therapy. He would cooperate and do things for the therapist if I would come along and do as she asked – he basically wanted to do everything I did. Also, when he was younger I was the only one who could understand him. This meant that I was often his translator and helped calm him down when he was getting frustrated. Even my Mom would sometimes have to ask me what he wanted or was trying to communicate.

Q2: What worked well and how do you wish you might have been more involved?

I wish I could have done more. Looking back I don't feel I was as involved as much as I could have been. But he and I played together a lot – and I think that helped him. Even today, now that he is 20 and I am 23 – we are still best friends and have many of the same interests. The issue is that I am really his only friend – he has always preferred me to other people his age or close to his age. I guess he is more comfortable around me.

Q3: What advice do you have for professionals about how they might include siblings in their brother or sister's services?

If speech is the issue then teaching the sibling alternative ways of communicating, such as sign language, would be helpful. Having just one person who can understand you goes a long way in making anyone feel better about themselves – but my brother needed more social contacts and communication help. Also, it would be important that siblings even at a young age understand their brother or sister's disability, what it is and what it means. I never knew exactly how to explain things to my friends who would come over to our house.