



**“I know my sister has cancer and I try to be so patient, Mommy. I try so hard.” -Ella C., SuperSib**

**Childhood cancer is tough on everyone in a family, including siblings.** The siblings may have to adjust to new schedules and routines, periods of separation from their sick brother or sister and more responsibility at home. A childhood cancer diagnosis also creates a rollercoaster of emotions for every family member.

SuperSibs is about providing emotional support to siblings after a brother or sister has received a cancer diagnosis. Siblings receive comfort, encouragement and positive attention through a series of mailings and online resources. SuperSibs is free to children and their families. To enroll in SuperSibs, the sibling must be between the ages of 4 and 18, live in the U.S. and have or have had a sibling with cancer.

**It is easy to refer all your eligible pediatric cancer families to SuperSibs.** Our online referral form (at SuperSibs.org) asks for basic demographic information such as family contact information, patient name and diagnosis, hospital name and sibling(s) names and birthdates. The SuperSibs program is not limited to or meant only for siblings who are currently experiencing distress; we believe all eligible siblings benefit from support during their family’s cancer journey.

After you refer a sibling to SuperSibs, the child’s parents/guardians receive an introductory “toolkit” outlining the program. The toolkit also offers tips on talking about cancer with siblings, family and teachers.



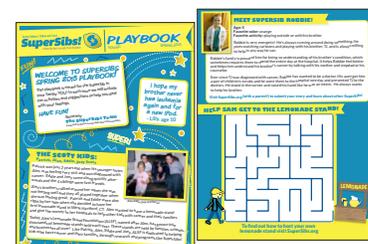
Sample of SuperSibs Parent Toolkit

**Children enrolled in SuperSibs receive Comfort and Care mailings over a two year period consisting of:**

- A welcome kit containing an age-appropriate book, a SuperSib certificate and fun surprises like temporary tattoos
- Twice yearly “Playbooks” with fun activities and age-appropriate advice on managing stress and difficult emotions
- Birthday cards with small gifts
- Small prizes to remind them that they are important, special and loved
- Specifically designed materials for bereaved siblings



SuperSibs Certificate



Sample of SuperSibs playbook for young children

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

**“When I grow up, I want to be a tree. That way I can reach all the way to heaven and Declan can climb down me to come home.” – Brendan R., SuperSib**

**“I’m going to be a scientist to try to cure kids with cancer but I have to find the right medicine.” – Meg S., SuperSib**

**“Chemo sharks go into Dominic and eat up all his cancer, so that he can grow big and get to go to school like me.” –Jordan S., SuperSib**

### About Siblings and Childhood Cancer

Brothers and sisters of children with cancer have been called the “shadow survivors.” The experience of having a sibling with cancer profoundly impacts their lives. Their struggle has been largely unrecognized and unsupported, as they experience grief from the loss of childhood as they knew it, loss of routine, affected friendships, and feelings of fear, hope, loneliness, anger, abandonment, guilt, jealousy and more.

Some siblings act out in negative ways to get the attention they desperately want and need, while others try to act like an “invisible perfect child” and assume adult responsibilities instead of typical childhood or teen activities and interests.

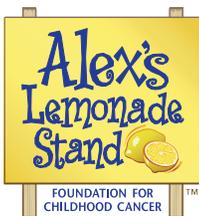
### Research shows:

- Nearly half (49%) of siblings in a survey reported mild symptoms of post-traumatic stress and 32% reported moderate to severe levels. Over half described the cancer experience as difficult and scary, and a quarter thought their brother or sister would die during treatment.<sup>1</sup>
- Siblings with more social support indicated significantly fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and fewer behavior problems than siblings with less social support. High levels of social support play a protective role in the psychological adjustment of siblings of pediatric cancer patients.<sup>2</sup>



Rebecca and Ellie

SuperSibs’ goal is to help siblings feel recognized, remembered, included and empowered. Our online referral form and tips for supporting siblings are available at [SuperSibs.org](http://SuperSibs.org).



### About SuperSibs:

SuperSibs was founded in 2002 by Melanie Goldish, who had noticed firsthand the impact a childhood cancer diagnosis had on the whole family, particularly siblings. She created SuperSibs to comfort, encourage and empower siblings during their family’s battle against childhood cancer. In 2014, SuperSibs became part of Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation, a national nonprofit with a mission of finding cures for childhood cancer by funding innovative medical research projects and helping families during their journey with the disease.

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup>Alderfer, M., Labay, L., & Kazak, A. (2003). Brief report: Does posttraumatic stress apply to siblings of childhood cancer survivors? *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 28, 281-286

<sup>2</sup>Barrera M, Fleming CF, Khan FS (2004). The role of emotional social support in the psychological adjustment of siblings of children with cancer. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 30, 103-111.