

Open Letter from a Sibling

When my mom died, we knew that there was no one in the family who had the capacity to take on the hands on advocacy role that she had played for my brother for years. My siblings and I were very grateful that my parents had gotten involved in By Their Side many years before. Though I think they got involved thinking it was a safety net for when both of them were gone, the reality is that we recognized that we needed the support sooner.

We contracted with By Their Side for monthly personal advocacy services. Over the last two years, we have built a strong relationship with Portia, the personal advocate assigned to my brother G. She has been invaluable through this major family transition. She visits my brother alternately at his group house and at his day setting. She serves as our eyes and ears. She has been willing to take on issues that we might not have been as assertive about to make sure that G gets all the services he needs. Because of Portia's persistence G is now being enrolled each session in a swimming class. Since swimming is his favorite activity this is huge. She has built good relationships with the staff at the organization that cares for G. And her knowledge of the system is so helpful. And because we are in touch with Portia via email and phone we were able to have her family point of contact be one of my sisters who is not local rather than me. With this in place, I am able to focus my time and energies on having G over to my house on a regular basis.

By Their Side has made all the difference in the world as my family has adjusted the new reality of life without my mom's strong presence.

Carol Hamilton
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