

Dear Families,

My name is Emily Kolovson Gaines and I am completing my doctoral degree in clinical psychology at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology in Newton, Massachusetts. I am writing to invite your family to participate in a research project about adolescent girls' experiences of growing up with a younger brother diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. I have had the privilege of developing close relationships with children diagnosed on the autism spectrum through my work at various school and camp programs. Through these experiences I know both how challenging and fulfilling these relationships can be. Given the unique relationship between siblings, I am hoping to develop a better understanding of the intricacies of the sibling dynamic when one child is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

For my doctoral project, I am examining how adolescent girls experience this relationship. I intend to come to a better understanding of how these relationships might foster strengths and impact development. I am looking for female adolescents between the ages of 15-18 with a younger brother diagnosed with Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. The siblings must live together.

Participation involves interviewing the adolescent alone for approximately 40 minutes. The interview will focus on the adolescent's understanding of autism, the impact of this disorder on them and their family and an exploration of the ways in which this diagnosis has influenced the development of their identity. The interview with the child can be scheduled at a time and place most convenient for the family and the researcher. I will come to your child's school to conduct interviews as well. I will try and be as accommodating as possible to the needs of each family and am willing to meet siblings in their homes. Interviews can also be conducted at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology in Newton, Massachusetts.

I am hopeful that through my research I will be able develop a better understanding of how adolescent girls experience having a brother on the autism spectrum. I will provide you with a summary of the results of my research project upon request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research project. If you have any questions or concerns or are interested in participating please contact me at Emily_Kolovson@mspp.edu or 860-836-1759.

Sincerely,
Emily Kolovson Gaines