

## Sharing information with young siblings

### Choose the right time and place

01

- It is crucial that you respect your child's comfort level on when they are ready to talk to their siblings
- Consider your child's preferences. Do they want to share the information or do they want you as a parent/caregiver to share it for them?
- Consider the language you will use with younger siblings. The goal is for them to understand as clearly as possible what is happening in their siblings' lives

*You can say:* "Hey (sibling name) can we all sit down together for a few minutes? (Child's name) wants to talk to you about something important."

"I've been feeling really overwhelmed and I wanted to share this with you. I'm struggling with my mental health and I know this might be a bit confusing or scary, but I think it's important that we talk about it so you can understand what's going on"

### Explain the diagnosis

02

- Use simple and age-appropriate language

*You can say:* "You have felt sad before, right? Normally, we find things to make us happy again. Like when we left the playground, you were crying, but then we went home to have cookies and you were smiling again. For some people, this feeling of being sad never goes away, and it's called depression"

"I have been diagnosed with depression. This means that sometimes I feel very sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, and I might need some extra help and support to feel better."

### Describe how you are feeling

03

- Use age-appropriate language that young children can relate to

*You can say:* "Lots of people have depression. It feels like a dark rainy cloud is following you everywhere you go all the time. This is why your brother/sister sometimes may not want to talk, play, get out of their room, or seem upset"

### Talk about treatment

04

- Talk about how you're getting help

*You can say:* "Just like there are doctors for when you get hurt or sick with there are doctors that help with how we feel"

"I'm working with a therapist and/or taking medication to help manage my mental health. I'm also doing things like exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep to take care of myself."

### Share how they can be a supportive member of the family

05

- Be open to questions and encourage siblings to talk about what they don't understand

*You can say:* "If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask me. I want you to know that this is not your fault, and you don't have to do anything special to make me feel better. Just being here for me is enough."