THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

When You Need Someone Right Now

Caregiver Wellness & Support · Caregiver Check-In

The national line to call or text when a caregiver or young person is in crisis.

IN THIS GUIDE

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A free guide from My Fairy GodParents — for youth impacted by parental incarceration, justice-impacted youth, and the caregivers and families who support them.
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

Print, write on it, and share it with the people helping your family.

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> *The national line to call or text when a caregiver or young person is in crisis.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

There are moments that a checklist does not reach: a night when the weight is unbearable, a child in a mental health emergency, a caregiver who has stopped being able to see any way forward. Knowing where to turn in that moment should not require research while it is happening.

Crisis lines exist for exactly this and are widely misunderstood. You do not have to be suicidal to use one, you do not need insurance, and you are not obligated to give a name or explain your family's circumstances.

This lesson is about knowing what exists before you need it, and putting the numbers somewhere findable by whoever is in the house.

WHAT THE NATIONAL LINES ARE FOR

In the United States, 988 is the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. It is available 24 hours a day by phone call or text and serves people in any kind of emotional crisis, not only those thinking about suicide. Caregivers use it for overwhelming distress, panic, and grief. There is a dedicated path for Spanish speakers and options for Deaf and hard-of-hearing callers.

The Crisis Text Line reaches a trained counselor by text, which many people find easier than speaking — particularly teenagers, and particularly in a house where a call cannot be private.

For domestic violence, the National Domestic Violence Hotline provides confidential support and safety planning. For child abuse concerns, the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline offers crisis counseling and information. Both operate around the clock.

211, run by United Way, is not a crisis line but a referral line: food, housing, utility assistance, childcare, and local services in your area. It is the fastest route from a practical emergency to a local organization.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL

A trained person answers and asks what is going on. You talk. They listen, help you get through the immediate moment, and where appropriate offer local resources. Most calls end with the person calmer and with a next step, not with intervention.

Many people hesitate because they fear an automatic emergency response or contact with authorities. Emergency services are involved only in a small minority of calls where there is imminent risk to life, and the counselor works with the caller first. If that concern is what is keeping you from calling, you can ask about it at the start of the conversation.

You can also hang up. You can call back and speak to someone different. You can text instead of talk. None of this counts against you.

+ WHEN THE PERSON IN CRISIS IS YOUR CHILD

Children and teenagers in families affected by incarceration carry losses that adults around them may not fully see. If a young person talks about not wanting to be here, gives away things that matter to them, withdraws sharply, or shows a sudden calm after a period of deep distress, treat it seriously and stay with them.

Take away access to anything obviously dangerous in the home, keep them company, and contact 988 or your local emergency number. Ask directly and plainly whether they are thinking about killing themselves. Asking does not plant the idea; it gives a young person permission to answer honestly.

Afterwards, keep the door open rather than making the episode a single crisis event. School counselors, pediatricians, and community mental health services can all be entry points to ongoing support.

+ PUT THE NUMBERS WHERE THEY CAN BE FOUND

The point of preparation is that nobody in your household should have to search during a crisis. Write the numbers somewhere physical — inside a kitchen cupboard, on the fridge, in a wallet — as well as saving them in your phone.

If children old enough to use a phone live in the house, tell them these numbers exist and that using one is never a betrayal of the family. A child who believes their family's situation must be kept secret at all costs may not reach for help when they need it.

+ ONE NIGHT, ONE TEXT

A caregiver two years into raising her sister's children reached a Tuesday night where she sat on the bathroom floor after everyone was asleep and could not stop crying. She did not think she was in danger. She also could not see how she was going to get up in the morning.

She texted the crisis line rather than calling, because the walls in the apartment were thin. The exchange lasted about forty minutes. Nothing about her circumstances changed. What changed was that she went to bed instead of sitting on the floor until 3am, and the next day she called her doctor.

She told a support group months later that the thing she wished she had known earlier was that she did not have to be at the very edge to be allowed to use it.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Opening a crisis line contact

You do not need to explain your whole situation. This is enough.

"I'm not in immediate danger, but I'm struggling badly tonight and I need to talk to someone. I'm the full-time caregiver for two children and I'm not coping. I'm not sure what I need — I just needed to say it out loud."

Asking a young person directly

Say plainly, without softening it into something they can dodge.

"I need to ask you something straight, and you won't be in trouble for any answer you give me. Have you been thinking about hurting yourself or about not being here anymore? I'm asking because I love you and I'd rather ask than guess."

Telling children the numbers exist

Say once, calmly, so it is normal rather than dramatic.

"There's a number on the fridge. If you ever feel like things are too much and you can't tell me, or I'm not here, you can call or text it any time of day and a real person answers. Using it is never telling on our family. It's just getting help."

+ PREPARE BEFORE YOU NEED IT

- [ ] Save 988 in your phone and write it somewhere physical in the home.
- [ ] Save a crisis text option, in case a call is not possible or not private.
- [ ] Save 211 for practical emergencies: food, housing, utilities, childcare.
- [ ] Save your local emergency number and the nearest emergency department address.
- [ ] Tell any child old enough to use a phone that these numbers exist and are allowed.
- [ ] Note your child's school counselor and pediatrician contacts in the same place.
- [ ] Remove or secure anything in the home that would be dangerous during a crisis.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Where in my home will the numbers physically live?

Who else in this household needs to know they are there?

Has anyone in my house shown signs I have been explaining away?

What would I want someone to say to me on a night like that?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

Add 988 to your phone contacts today.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Source: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — verified August 2026. Curated and summarized by MFGP.
https://988lifeline.org/
This is general information and practice guidance — not legal advice, mental-health treatment, or a statement of any court, agency, or facility's rules. Policies differ by state, county, facility, school, and program, so always confirm details with the office involved.
For decisions with legal, medical, financial, or clinical consequences, work with a licensed professional or the organizations listed with each resource.

You do not have to do this alone.

More free guides, scripts, and checklists:
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint