THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

The Caregiver Weekly Check-In

Caregiver Wellness & Support · Caregiver Check-In

Four questions to ask yourself before the week starts.

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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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> *Four questions to ask yourself before the week starts.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Caregiving in a family touched by incarceration rarely arrives with a handover meeting. One week you are an aunt, a grandmother, a father, a family friend, and the next week you are the person who signs the school forms, answers the hard questions at bedtime, and keeps track of a phone account, a court date, and a child who is not sleeping well.

Most caregivers in that position do not stop to ask how they are doing. There is no time in the day where that question naturally fits, and asking it can feel indulgent when a child needs dinner. So the answer builds up quietly until it comes out as exhaustion, short temper, or a health problem that has been ignored for months.

A weekly check-in is a small, repeatable habit that puts the question somewhere on the calendar. It takes ten minutes. It is not therapy and it does not fix the circumstances. What it does is catch the load before it becomes a crisis, and give you evidence of what is actually happening rather than a vague sense that everything is hard.

WHAT A CHECK-IN ACTUALLY IS

A check-in is four questions asked in the same order, at the same time each week, with the answers written down somewhere you can look back at. That is the whole method. The power is in the repetition, not in the sophistication of the questions.

Writing matters more than people expect. Thoughts that circle endlessly in your head tend to shrink once they are on paper, and a week later you can see whether the same thing is still on the list. A caregiver who writes "the drive to the facility" three weeks running has learned something real about where their energy is going, which is far more useful than a general feeling of being overwhelmed.

Pick the time deliberately. Sunday evening works for many households because the coming week is visible. Others prefer the first quiet moment after a school drop-off. Choose the slot where you are least likely to be interrupted, and treat it as the same kind of fixed appointment as a medical visit.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

What feels hardest today? Name one thing, not five. Specific beats sweeping: "the 6am wake-ups" is

workable, "everything" is not.

What can wait? Almost every caregiver is carrying tasks that feel urgent but are not. Identifying one thing that can move to next month is the fastest way to create room this week.

Who can help? Name a person, not a category. "Someone from church" is a wish. "Ms. Alvarez, who offered rides in September" is a plan.

What is one thing I need this week? Keep it small enough to actually happen. A full night of sleep, one uninterrupted hour, a phone call returned, a meal you did not cook.

READING YOUR OWN ANSWERS

After three or four weeks, patterns appear. The same hardest thing repeating usually means it is structural rather than a bad week, and structural problems need a different response than a bad week does. Something that can wait but never moves is often a task that belongs to someone else, or one that should be dropped entirely.

Watch the help question in particular. If you cannot name a person for several weeks in a row, your support circle has thinned, and rebuilding it deserves priority over almost anything else on the list. The lesson on mapping your support circle is the natural next step there.

Also watch for the week you skip. Missing a check-in is not a failure, but skipping several in a row is usually a sign that the load has grown, not that things got easier.

WHEN THE CHECK-IN POINTS AT SOMETHING BIGGER

Sometimes the honest answer to "what feels hardest" is not a task at all. It is grief, dread, anger at an adult who is not present, or a flat numbness that has lasted weeks. Those answers deserve more than a checklist.

That is not a sign the check-in failed. It is the check-in doing exactly what it is meant to do: surfacing something before it surfaces on its own terms. The lessons on recognizing overload and on crisis and support lines cover what to do next, and neither requires you to describe your family's private circumstances to anyone you do not choose to tell.

HOW THIS LOOKED FOR ONE GRANDMOTHER

A grandmother raising two grandchildren, ages 7 and 13, started her check-in on Sunday nights after the younger child went to bed. Week one, the hardest thing was the school pickup time, which collided with her work shift. She wrote it down and moved on.

Week two, it was the school pickup again. Week three, the same. On week four she stopped treating it as a weekly annoyance and treated it as a structural problem: she asked the school whether the 13-year-old could be released to walk the younger one home, then arranged a written note authorizing it and a check-in call each afternoon.

The fix took one conversation. What made it possible was seeing the same sentence written three weeks in

a row, which turned an ambient stress into a specific problem with an owner and a solution.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Asking one person for one concrete thing

Text or say to a friend, neighbor, or relative who has offered vaguely to help.

“Hi — you offered to help a while back and I'm taking you up on it. Could you pick the kids up from school this Thursday at 3:15? It's about a 20-minute round trip. If Thursday doesn't work, no problem at all — is there a day that does?”

Protecting the check-in time

Say to household members so the ten minutes is respected.

“On Sunday nights after dinner I'm taking ten minutes to myself to plan the week. I'm not upset and nothing's wrong — I just need those ten minutes uninterrupted. I'll come find you right after.”

Naming the load out loud

Say to a trusted adult when the honest answer is "I'm not okay this week".

“I want to say this to someone rather than sit on it: this week has been heavier than usual and I'm running on empty. I'm not asking you to fix it. I just needed one person to know.”

+ SET UP YOUR WEEKLY CHECK-IN

- [ ] Choose a fixed ten-minute slot and put it in your phone as a repeating reminder.
- [ ] Pick where the answers live: a notebook, a notes app, or the My Blueprint panel on this site.
- [ ] Write the four questions at the top of the page so you never have to remember them.
- [ ] Answer with one specific item each — no lists, no "everything".
- [ ] Name a real person for the help question, even if you do not contact them this week.
- [ ] At the end of the month, read back through and mark anything that repeated.
- [ ] Turn one repeating item into a structural fix rather than a weekly coping effort.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

What was hardest for me this week, in one sentence?

Which task on my list could wait until next month without real consequence?

Who is one person I could ask for one specific thing this week?

What is the smallest thing that would make next week easier?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> Write down the one thing you need this week and who could help.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Written by My Fairy GodParents — reviewed August 2026.

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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