THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Building a First Resume

Educational & Scholarship Pathways · Career & Workforce Pathways

What to include when a young person has school, volunteering, and family responsibility but little formal work history.

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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> *What to include when a young person has school, volunteering, and family responsibility but little formal work history.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

First resumes are rarely rejected because the applicant is unqualified. They are rejected because they are empty — half a page listing a graduation year and no evidence that a person did anything.

Young people from households carrying a lot are usually the opposite of inexperienced. They have run households, cared for siblings, handled appointments, worked cash jobs, and kept commitments under conditions most adults would find hard. Almost none of that ends up on the page, because nobody told them it counts.

This lesson is about getting real responsibility onto a resume in language an employer recognizes, without inventing anything and without exposing private family details.

THE STRUCTURE THAT WORKS

One page. Name, phone, professional-sounding email, and city at the top. No photo, no birth date, no full street address.

Then four blocks in this order: a two-line summary, experience, education, and skills. For a student with no formal jobs, education can move above experience.

The two-line summary states what you are looking for and what you bring. 'Reliable high-school senior seeking part-time retail work. Two years of consistent volunteer and family responsibility, comfortable with customers and cash handling.' That is enough.

Use plain fonts and consistent formatting. Many resumes are read first by software that mangles columns, tables, and graphics — a simple document survives better than a designed one.

WHAT COUNTS AS EXPERIENCE

Paid jobs count, obviously — including informal ones. Yard work, braiding hair, babysitting, helping at a family business, reselling, and repair work are all real work and can be listed with a self-employed or freelance label.

Unpaid responsibility counts too, when described as work rather than as family circumstance. Managing a household schedule, getting siblings to school daily for two years, handling grocery shopping on a budget, and coordinating appointments are logistics, reliability, and budgeting.

Volunteering, clubs, sports, church roles, and school activities count, especially with a duration and a responsibility attached.

The rule is truthfulness with dignity: describe the function, not the family crisis. 'Coordinated daily transportation and school schedules for two younger children' is accurate and belongs on a resume. The reason it was necessary does not.

+ WRITING THE BULLETS

Each bullet starts with a verb and, where possible, contains a number. Numbers are what convert a claim into evidence: how many people, how many hours, how often, how much money.

Compare 'Responsible for siblings' with 'Managed morning routine and school transportation for two children, five days a week, for two school years.' Same fact. Only one reads as a worker.

Three bullets per entry is plenty. Cut adjectives — hardworking, dedicated, motivated — and let the specifics do that job.

Skills at the bottom should be concrete: cash handling, point-of-sale systems, Spanish, basic spreadsheets, food-safety certification, driver's license. Skip 'good communicator' unless something above proves it.

+ REFERENCES, APPLICATIONS, AND FOLLOW-UP

Line up two or three references before applying and ask permission: a teacher, a coach, a supervisor, a youth leader. Do not list a relative. Keep their names and numbers on a separate sheet rather than on the resume.

Apply in person where that is still normal — small businesses often hire the person who walked in. For online applications, tailor the summary line to each posting; it takes two minutes and noticeably raises the response rate.

Follow up once, about a week later, by phone or in person. Politeness plus persistence is the entire strategy for a first job.

If a record or a gap comes up, prepare one calm sentence and practice it out loud. What matters to an employer is not the story but whether you are steady when the subject arises.

+ FROM FOUR LINES TO ONE PAGE

A seventeen-year-old's first resume had his name, his high school, and 'looking for a job.' He told the counselor he had never worked. Then she asked what his weekdays looked like.

He woke his two younger sisters at six, made breakfast, walked them to the elementary school, went to his own classes, picked them up, and cooked most nights. He had also cut lawns for four neighbors every

summer since he was thirteen and had never lost a customer.

The finished page read: 'Lawn Care — Self-employed, three summers. Maintained four regular residential clients with no missed appointments; handled scheduling, pricing, and cash payments.' And: 'Household Coordination — Managed daily routine and school transportation for two children, five days a week, two school years; handled weekly grocery budget of about $120.'

Nothing was invented and no family detail was disclosed. He was hired at a grocery store three weeks later.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Turning family responsibility into a resume bullet

Patterns to adapt. Function, not circumstance.

"• Managed daily routine and school transportation for [N] children, [X] days a week, over [duration]. • Handled weekly household grocery budget of approximately $[amount], including planning and price comparison. • Coordinated medical and school appointments, including scheduling and follow-up calls. • Provided regular childcare for [N] children ages [range], including meals and homework support."

Listing informal paid work

Self-employed is a legitimate label.

"• Lawn Care / Hair Braiding / Repairs — Self-employed, [dates]. Maintained [N] regular clients; managed scheduling, pricing, and cash handling with no missed appointments."

Asking someone to be a reference

Always ask first.

"Hi [Name] — I'm applying for my first job and I'd like to list you as a reference. You've seen me [show up to practice / work in class / help at the center] for [duration]. Would you be comfortable with that? If so, what's the best number for an employer to reach you?"

Following up on an application

Once, about a week after applying.

"Hi, my name is [Name] and I applied for the [position] on [date]. I wanted to follow up and say I'm still very interested. Is there anything else you need from me, or a good time to come in?"

+ YOUR FIRST-RESUME BUILD

- [ ] One page: contact, two-line summary, experience, education, skills.
- [ ] Use a professional email address and leave off your street address.
- [ ] List informal paid work as self-employed.
- [ ] Convert household responsibility into function-based bullets.
- [ ] Start each bullet with a verb and include a number.
- [ ] Cut adjectives; keep specifics.
- [ ] Ask two or three non-relative references for permission.
- [ ] Tailor the summary line to each posting.
- [ ] Follow up once, about a week later.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

What have I actually been responsible for that I've never called work?

What number can I attach to it — how many, how often, how long?

Who outside my family would vouch for how I show up?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> List five things you have been responsible for in the last year.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Source: CareerOneStop — Local Help — verified August 2026. Curated and summarized by MFGP.
https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/local-help.aspx
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