THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Map Your Support Circle

Caregiver Wellness & Support · Build Your Support Circle

A one-page exercise for naming who is actually available, and for what.

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.

Map Your Support Circle

> *A one-page exercise for naming who is actually available, and for what.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Caregivers in families affected by incarceration often describe having no support, and when they sit down and actually list people, that turns out not to be true. What is usually true is that the support is scattered, unasked, and invisible — a neighbor who once offered, a coach who is fond of the child, a cousin who checks in but has never been given a job.

Support that lives only as goodwill does not reduce anyone's load. Support becomes real when a specific person is connected to a specific need, and both of you know it.

Mapping is how you find out what you actually have. It usually takes twenty minutes and produces two useful things: a short list of people who can be asked, and an honest picture of where the gaps are.

THE FOUR RINGS

Inner ring — people who already know your family's situation and can be called without preamble. For many caregivers this is one or two people, sometimes none, and that is common rather than a failure.

Practical ring — people who can do a concrete task without needing the backstory: rides, childcare, a meal, a repair, sitting with a child for an hour. They do not need to know why.

Institutional ring — the school counselor, the pediatrician, the church, a kinship navigator, a caseworker, a library program. These are people whose job includes helping, which makes them easier to ask than friends.

Peer ring — other caregivers in similar circumstances. This ring does something the others cannot: it removes the need to explain, and it reminds you the situation is not a personal failing.

HOW TO DO THE MAPPING

Write the four ring names down the page and put every name you can think of under one of them, without filtering for whether you would actually ask. Include people you have not spoken to in a year. Include people who once offered and were never taken up on it.

Then, next to each name, write one thing that person could realistically do. This is the step that turns a list of relationships into a support plan. "Aunt Renee — Sunday dinners" is usable. "Aunt Renee — supportive" is

not.

Finally, mark the rings that are empty or nearly empty. That is your gap list, and it tells you where to spend effort rather than trying to build everything at once.

FILLING GAPS DELIBERATELY

An empty institutional ring is usually the fastest to fix, because you are contacting people whose role is to help. Start with the school counselor and 211, which connects you to local services including kinship supports, childcare, and food assistance.

An empty peer ring is filled through kinship caregiver groups, family support programs, and community organizations serving families affected by incarceration. Many run online, which matters when leaving the house is the hard part.

An empty practical ring is usually not about scarcity but about asking. Most caregivers have more names available here than they use, because asking feels like an imposition. The lesson on asking for help exists for exactly that.

KEEPING THE MAP ALIVE

A support map goes stale. People move, roles change, a relationship cools, a new coach or teacher turns out to be someone the child trusts. Look at it every few months — the weekly check-in is a natural place to notice when the help question has no answer.

Also record what people are actually willing to do, once you know. Someone who says yes to rides and no to overnights is not being difficult; they are giving you accurate information, which makes the map more reliable.

ELEVEN NAMES IN TWENTY MINUTES

A caregiver who told her support group she had "nobody" was asked to write the rings out anyway. She listed eleven names. Her inner ring had one person, her sister. Her practical ring had four, including a neighbor who had brought food after the arrest and had never been asked for anything since.

Her institutional ring was almost empty, which surprised her — she had never contacted the school counselor because she assumed that meant explaining everything. Her peer ring was empty until that meeting.

Over the following month she emailed the counselor, asked the neighbor for one Thursday pickup, and kept coming to the group. Nothing about her family's circumstances changed. Her sense of being alone in it did.

WORDS YOU CAN USE

Re-opening a relationship that has gone quiet

Text to someone you have not spoken with in months.

"Hi — I know it's been a while and that's on me; things have been a lot here. I've been thinking about you. No agenda, I just didn't want more time to go by. How are you doing?"

Introducing yourself to the school counselor

Email. You do not have to explain the family's circumstances.

"Hello — I'm the caregiver for [child's name] in [grade]. I'd like to be a consistent point of contact and know how you prefer to be reached. If anything comes up with attendance, grades, or how they're doing socially, please contact me directly. Is there a good time for a brief introduction call?"

Finding a peer group through 211

Say when you call 211 or a local family services line.

"I'm a relative caring full-time for a child whose parent is incarcerated. I'm looking for a kinship caregiver support group or a family support program in my area — in person or online. Can you tell me what's available near me?"

+ MAP YOUR CIRCLE THIS WEEK

- [ ] Write the four rings on one page: inner, practical, institutional, peer.
- [ ] List every name you can think of, without filtering.
- [ ] Write one concrete thing each person could realistically do.
- [ ] Mark which rings are empty or nearly empty.
- [ ] Contact one institutional support — school counselor, pediatrician, or 211.
- [ ] Ask one practical-ring person for one specific thing.
- [ ] Find one peer group option, even if you only look at it for now.
- [ ] Save the map somewhere you will see it again in three months.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Which of my four rings is thinnest right now?

Who is on my list that I have never actually asked for anything?

Which institution near us has helping as part of its job?

What is the one contact I will make in the next seven days?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> Write three names in the inner ring and confirm one of them this week.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Written by My Fairy GodParents — reviewed August 2026.

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.

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You do not have to do this alone.

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