THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Who Can Enroll a Child and Approve Medical Care

Legal & Policy Literacy · Family & Caregiver Questions

The two authorization questions caregivers hit first, and how to get answers locally.

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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 DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Enrollment and medical consent are usually the first two walls a caregiver hits, often within the same week, because they are the two decisions institutions are least willing to take on trust. Everything else in a child's life — sports, field trips, prescriptions, therapy — tends to sit downstream of these two.

Both questions have the same underlying shape: an institution needs a document that establishes your authority to act, the document that qualifies varies by state and sometimes by district or provider, and the fastest path through is knowing exactly what to ask for rather than explaining your family's story.

This lesson walks through how enrollment and medical consent generally work for a caregiver who is not the child's legal parent, and how to get the local answer quickly. It describes common patterns; it does not state what you personally qualify for, since that depends on your state's law and your specific arrangement with the child's parent.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Many states and districts accept some form of caregiver affidavit — a sworn statement that a relative or other adult is caring for the child and needs to enroll them — without requiring a full guardianship. The exact form, and whether it is called an affidavit, an authorization, or something else, is set locally.

Federal protections for children experiencing housing instability, including many children who move in with relatives due to a parent's incarceration, can also affect enrollment rights and remove some common barriers such as requiring proof of residency immediately. Ask the district's homeless liaison or registrar whether these protections apply to your situation.

If a district asks for documentation you do not have, ask specifically what alternative it will accept — many districts have more flexibility than the first person you speak to indicates, and a supervisor or the district's family liaison may know options a front-desk staff member does not.

MEDICAL CONSENT

Routine medical care — checkups, vaccinations, prescriptions — generally requires either the parent's signed consent authorizing the caregiver to consent, or a legal document such as a power of attorney for

health care or guardianship. Some states have a specific statutory form for exactly this purpose; ask the provider by name whether they use one.

Emergency care is treated differently by most providers: a child in a true medical emergency will generally be treated regardless of paperwork on file, because emergency treatment does not wait on consent in the way routine care does. This does not mean paperwork can be skipped for anything short of an emergency.

Mental health treatment, certain vaccinations, and reproductive health care sometimes have separate consent rules that differ from general medical consent, including rules that allow older minors to consent to some care themselves in some states. This is a category where confirming the specific rule with the provider or a legal aid organization matters more than assuming.

+ GETTING IT IN WRITING

Once an institution tells you what it requires and confirms it has accepted your document, ask for that confirmation in an email or a signed note. Staff turnover is common, and a new employee unfamiliar with your file is one of the most frequent reasons an already-resolved question resurfaces.

If a school or clinic refuses a document you believe should work, ask for the refusal and the stated reason in writing. This is the single most useful thing you can bring to a legal aid consultation, because it tells the attorney exactly what was rejected and why.

Keep both documents — the original authorization and any written confirmation or refusal — in your paperwork folder alongside the child's birth certificate, immunization records, and insurance information.

+ WHEN THE PARENT IS REACHABLE AND WHEN THEY ARE NOT

If the child's incarcerated parent can still sign documents (the same applies when the young person is in placement and a guardian must act on their behalf), a notarized authorization or power of attorney executed with their consent is often the most straightforward path, and many facilities have a process for notarizing documents for people in custody — ask the facility's records office or the parent directly.

If the parent is unreachable, has not consented, or the family situation is more contested, a caregiver affidavit, temporary guardianship, or another court process may be the applicable route depending on the state. This is exactly the kind of fork where a legal aid consultation, rather than continued research, is the efficient next step.

Whichever path applies, act on the enrollment and medical questions early rather than waiting for a crisis. A prescription refill or a school registration deadline is a difficult moment to be solving a paperwork problem for the first time.

+ TWO PHONE CALLS BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR

A caregiver contacted her school district in July, before enrollment deadlines, specifically asking what document their district accepted from relative caregivers. The registrar named a specific affidavit, explained where to get it notarized, and mentioned the district's family liaison in case anything was unclear.

She then called the pediatrician's office and learned they needed a separate signed authorization form from the child's parent, which she was able to get notarized during a scheduled visit at the facility where he was incarcerated.

By the time school started, both documents were on file and confirmed by email. When a substitute front-office worker later questioned her status, she forwarded the confirmation email and the issue was resolved in minutes instead of days.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Asking about a caregiver affidavit

School registrar or family liaison.

"I'm a relative caregiver, not the child's parent. Does your district accept a caregiver affidavit or similar authorization for enrollment? Could you tell me exactly where I need to have it notarized or filed?"

Asking a clinic about consent documents

Medical office intake.

"I care for this child full-time but I'm not their legal parent. What signed authorization do you need on file for routine visits and prescriptions? Is there a specific form your office uses?"

Arranging notarization with an incarcerated parent

To the facility's records office or during a visit.

"I need [the child's parent] to sign and have notarized a [power of attorney / medical authorization] for their child. Can you tell me your facility's process for having a document notarized for someone in custody?"

Confirming an accepted document in writing

Follow-up email to a school or clinic after a document is accepted.

"Thank you for confirming that the [document name] I provided on [date] is on file and sufficient for [enrollment / medical consent]. Could you reply to confirm this in writing for my records?"

+ SET UP AUTHORIZATION BEFORE YOU NEED IT

- [ ] Ask your school district by name what document it requires for enrollment.
- [ ] Ask whether federal housing-instability protections apply to your child's enrollment.
- [ ] Ask your medical provider what signed authorization it requires for routine care.
- [ ] Ask separately about mental health, vaccination, and reproductive health consent rules if relevant.

- [ ] If the parent is reachable, ask the facility about notarizing a document during a visit.
- [ ] Get written confirmation once any document is accepted.
- [ ] Keep the confirmation, the document, and the child's records together in one folder.
- [ ] If a document is refused, get the refusal and reason in writing before contacting legal aid.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Do I currently have a document on file at my child's school? At their medical provider?

If the parent is reachable, have we discussed what they would need to sign?

What would happen this week if my child needed a prescription refill or an emergency room visit?

What is the one call I will make before the next school or medical deadline?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> Call the district registrar and ask exactly which document they require.

+ WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Written by My Fairy GodParents — reviewed August 2026.
Official reference: USA.gov — Legal Aid — linked for the official rules and forms, which MFGP does not set.
https://www.usa.gov/legal-aid
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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.
The information provided through The #FKLM Family Blueprint is for general educational purposes and is not legal advice. Laws and policies differ by jurisdiction and may change. Families needing advice about their individual circumstances should consult an appropriately qualified attorney or legal-services organization.

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