THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Deciding What Family Information to Share

Co-Parenting & Communication · Inside-Out Co-Parenting

A framework for what the inside parent and outside caregiver each need to know, and what can wait.

IN THIS GUIDE

- Sort information into three buckets
- Choose channels before you need them
- Keep the child out of the exchange
- Put it in writing
- Try it: a real example
- Scripts you can use
- Your checklist

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.

Deciding What Family Information to Share

> *A framework for what the inside parent and outside caregiver each need to know, and what can wait.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

Most conflict between an inside parent and an outside caregiver does not start with a disagreement about parenting. It starts with a surprise — a school suspension mentioned for the first time three weeks later, a new boyfriend the child brings up on a call before the parent has heard a word about him, a diagnosis the caregiver assumed was too complicated to explain over a monitored line. The hurt in these moments is rarely about the fact itself. It is about finding out sideways.

The two adults raising a child across a wall are working from different information by default. The caregiver sees the day-to-day: the grades, the moods, the friendships, the doctor's notes. The inside parent sees almost none of it unless someone decides to pass it along, and decides in time for it to matter. Without an agreement, that decision gets made ad hoc, under stress, by whoever remembers or whoever has the energy that week.

This lesson is about building that agreement on purpose, before the next hard thing happens rather than in the middle of it. It will not remove disagreement between two adults who see the child differently. It will remove the layer of conflict that comes purely from not knowing — which is often the layer that does the most damage to trust.

SORT INFORMATION INTO THREE BUCKETS

Needs to be known now: anything touching safety, health, or a major change in the child's life. A hospital visit, a new medication, a school suspension, a move, a new adult living in the household, a serious behavior change. These get communicated as soon as reasonably possible, through whatever channel is fastest — not saved for the next scheduled call.

Can wait for the next regular contact: ordinary school updates, a mood swing that passed, a friendship dispute that resolved itself, an activity the child tried and dropped. These matter, but they do not need a special call or an urgent letter. They belong in the next scheduled update.

Not the child's business to carry: adult disagreements about money, other relationships, legal strategy, or frustration with each other. These are real and sometimes urgent for the adults, but they are not information for the child to relay, overhear, or be asked about, and they generally should not travel through the child at

all.

The sorting itself is the hard part, and reasonable people will draw the line differently. That is exactly why it is worth agreeing on ahead of time rather than deciding case by case under pressure.

+ CHOOSE CHANNELS BEFORE YOU NEED THEM

Calls are expensive in time and often monitored, so they are a poor channel for detail and a fine channel for the short, urgent version of something. Letters and email (where available) can hold more detail and let the inside parent reread something instead of trying to absorb it in one pass on a scratchy line.

Agree in advance who initiates urgent updates and how. If the caregiver typically calls the facility or sends a message through an approved system, know what that path is before the day you need it, not while you are also managing the actual emergency.

For non-urgent updates, a light rhythm works better than an open-ended promise to 'keep each other posted.' A short written update every two weeks, or whatever the facility's contact schedule allows, is something both adults can actually sustain.

+ KEEP THE CHILD OUT OF THE EXCHANGE

Children should not be the messenger for adult information, and they should especially not be the messenger for adult conflict. A child who is asked 'did you tell your mom about the school thing yet' is being handed a job that belongs to the adults.

It also matters what a child overhears. A caregiver on a call who starts listing complaints about the other parent while the child is in the room, even quietly, teaches the child that these calls are unsafe. Save that conversation for a separate call or a private letter between the two adults.

When something does need to be raised with the inside parent directly and privately, say so plainly to the child rather than pretending the topic does not exist: 'that's something I need to talk to your mom about, not something for you to carry.'

+ PUT IT IN WRITING

An agreement that lives only in memory dissolves the first time either adult is exhausted, angry, or simply forgets. Write down, even in a few lines, what counts as urgent, how it gets shared, and roughly how often the non-urgent update happens.

Revisit it. What felt reasonable when a child was six may not fit when the child is eleven and has more going on. A short check-in every few months — does this still work, does anything need to change — keeps the agreement useful instead of theoretical.

+ THE SUSPENSION THAT ALMOST BECAME A BIGGER FIGHT

A caregiver did not tell the inside parent about a three-day school suspension until their next scheduled call

two weeks later, assuming it could wait since the issue had already been handled. The parent heard about it from the child first, on an earlier call, in a confused and half-accurate version, and felt shut out of decisions about his own son.

The two adults were not actually far apart on how to handle the suspension itself. The anger was entirely about the delay and about hearing it from the child rather than the caregiver.

Afterward they agreed on a simple rule: anything involving school discipline, health, or a change in who lives in the house gets a message within 48 hours, even a short one, even if the full conversation happens later. The next time something similar came up, the caregiver sent a two-line note the same day. There was no second fight.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Proposing the three buckets

Letter or call between the two adults, not in front of the child.

“I want us to agree on what gets shared right away versus what can wait, so neither of us is caught off guard. Can we agree that anything about safety, health, school discipline, or who's living in the house gets to you within a couple of days, and everything else I'll cover in our regular updates?”

Delivering an urgent update briefly

When time or the channel is limited.

“I only have a minute, so here's the short version: [child] had [event] on [date]. She's okay / it's being handled. I'll send the full details in my next letter, but I didn't want you finding out later.”

Redirecting a child who is asked to relay adult information

Say to the child if they've been put in the middle.

“That's something I need to talk to your mom about directly — it's not something you need to pass along or worry about. You can just let her know I said I'd be in touch with her.”

Raising a private adult disagreement without the child present

“I'd like to talk about [issue] but not on this call, since it's between the two of us. Can we set a time to talk it through directly, without her in the room?”

+ BUILD THE SHARING AGREEMENT

- [ ] Agree on what counts as ’needs to be known now’ for your family specifically.

- [ ] Decide who initiates urgent updates and through which channel.
- [ ] Set a realistic rhythm for non-urgent updates that both adults can sustain.
- [ ] Agree that adult disagreements are not relayed through the child.
- [ ] Write the agreement down, even briefly.
- [ ] Tell the child plainly when a topic is for the adults, not for them to carry.
- [ ] Revisit the agreement every few months as the child gets older.
- [ ] Confirm what channels are actually available given the facility's rules.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

What information has caused a surprise or a hurt feeling between us in the past?

Which bucket do I tend to misjudge — sharing too late, or oversharing what should wait?

Has our child ever been asked to carry a message that should have gone adult to adult?

What is one update I am overdue in sending right now?

+ YOUR NEXT STEP

> Choose the one update that will always be shared, no matter what.

+ 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.

You do not have to do this alone.

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