THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Finding a Group of People Who Get It

Caregiver Wellness & Support · Build Your Support Circle

Where families affected by incarceration find peer support, online and locally.

IN THIS GUIDE

- The kinds of groups that exist
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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.

Finding a Group of People Who Get It

> *Where families affected by incarceration find peer support, online and locally.*

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

The isolation in families affected by incarceration is often heavier than the logistics. Caregivers describe editing themselves constantly — at work, at school events, with neighbors — because explaining where the child's parent is invites judgment they do not have energy for.

A support group removes that editing. In a room or a video call where everyone's family has been through something similar, the backstory is already understood and the conversation can start at what actually helps.

Groups also carry practical intelligence that no website has: which local office answers the phone, which school staff member is genuinely helpful, how another caregiver handled the same conversation you are dreading.

THE KINDS OF GROUPS THAT EXIST

Kinship and relative caregiver groups, often run by kinship navigator programs, family resource centers, or Area Agencies on Aging. The focus is the caregiving role, the paperwork, and the exhaustion.

Groups specifically for families affected by incarceration, run by nonprofits and faith communities. These deal directly with visits, calls, stigma, and children's questions.

Children's and youth groups, sometimes school-based, sometimes run by mentoring organizations. A young person talking with peers who share the experience gets something no adult can provide.

General caregiver and grief groups. Less specific, easier to find, and still valuable — much of what caregivers carry is grief that has no funeral.

HOW TO FIND ONE

Call 211 and ask for caregiver support groups and kinship support groups in your area. Ask about both in-person and virtual options, because virtual removes the childcare barrier that stops most caregivers from attending anything.

Ask your child's school counselor or family liaison what local families use. Ask a librarian — libraries frequently host these groups and know the schedule. Faith communities often run them and usually do not

require membership.

National organizations serving families affected by incarceration maintain resource listings and sometimes run online groups directly. Searching for your state name together with "kinship caregiver support group" is generally more productive than searching for national programs.

+ WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST TIME

Most groups open with introductions at whatever level of detail you choose. You are allowed to say your first name and that you are listening this week. Nobody is required to disclose anything, and any group that pressures you to is not a good group.

Confidentiality is normally stated at the start. Ask about it if it is not, particularly if you live somewhere small enough that people may know your family.

Try two or three sessions before deciding. First meetings are often awkward for reasons that have nothing to do with fit, and the value of a group usually appears in the second or third one.

+ IF NO GROUP FITS

In rural areas and small towns there may be nothing local, and the online option becomes the real one. Video groups and moderated online communities serve caregivers who would otherwise have no peers at all.

You can also build the smallest possible version: two caregivers who text each other on hard days. That is not a lesser substitute — it delivers the two things that matter most, being understood and being able to say the true thing out loud.

A group is also not therapy. If what you are carrying needs clinical support, a group can sit alongside that rather than replace it.

+ WHAT THE SECOND MEETING GAVE HER

A caregiver went to a library kinship group once, found it awkward, and nearly did not return. She went back because a woman there had offered her phone number, which felt harder to ignore than a flyer.

At the second meeting, another grandmother described exactly the school problem she had been fighting for two months and named the district staff member who had resolved it. She emailed that person the next morning.

The practical win mattered. What she talked about later was different: it was the first hour in a year she had spent with adults who did not need the situation explained, and where she had not had to be careful.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Asking 211 or a library for groups

"I'm looking for a support group for caregivers raising a relative's child, ideally one that understands families affected by incarceration. Are there any meeting nearby, and are there online options as well?"

Introducing yourself at a first meeting

You are allowed to say exactly this much and no more.

"I'm [first name]. I'm raising my grandson full-time and it's been about eight months. I'm mostly here to listen this week, if that's okay."

Starting the smallest version of a group

Say to one other caregiver you meet anywhere.

"Would you want to swap numbers? Not for anything formal — just so there's one person who already knows the situation on the days it's a lot. I'd do the same for you."

Asking about a group for your child

Say to a school counselor.

"Are there any groups at school or nearby where my child could be around other kids dealing with a parent being away? I think it would help her to know she isn't the only one, and I'd rather she heard that from other kids than from me."

+ FIND YOUR PEOPLE

- [ ] Call 211 and ask for both kinship and caregiver support groups.
- [ ] Ask about virtual options if childcare or transport is the barrier.
- [ ] Ask the school counselor what local families use, including groups for children.
- [ ] Check your public library's calendar for hosted groups.
- [ ] Ask about confidentiality before you share anything personal.
- [ ] Commit to attending two or three times before deciding whether it fits.
- [ ] Exchange numbers with one person if it goes well.
- [ ] If nothing local exists, find one online group and try it this month.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

Where do I currently edit myself most, and what does that cost me?

What kind of group would fit my week: in person, virtual, or one phone contact?

Would my child benefit from being around peers in the same situation?

What is the one call or search I will do this week?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Identify one group and attend or join once this month.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Written by My Fairy GodParents — reviewed August 2026.
Official reference: Boys Town — Crisis Support — linked for the official rules and forms, which MFGP does not set.
https://www.boystown.org/child-family-services/crisis
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