

# It's ALL Relative

GCCOA Kinship Newsletter

Winter 2024

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## When a Child's Parent is in Prison

Many times a kinship situation arises because the child's parent is in prison. This is a difficult situation, and raises some important questions.

- ◆ **Should I tell the child where their parent is?** The short answer is yes. A very young child can be told that "mom can't be here right now", but beyond that it's best to tell the truth, especially if there's a chance that the child will learn about it at school or in the community. Rather than making anything up, it is ok to say "I don't know.", or to give limited information. A child will generally ask for more when they are ready to handle it.
- ◆ **Should I take the child on prison visits?** This answer is more complicated. If the parent and child had a close relationship, prison visits will help continue that bond. If not, or if the visits cause the child to have emotional or behavioral issues then *it is ok* if the child does not visit. The same answer applies to letters, phone calls, or video chats.
- ◆ **What if the child lashes out?** Each child will react differently, but hurt, anger, anxiety, or sadness are common. Let the child know it's ok to feel this way. If necessary, find counseling. Reassure the child that it is NOT their fault that their parent is in prison, and that you love them and aren't going anywhere.
- ◆ **What happens when the parent is released? Do I have to give the child back?** If you have legal custody, you are not required to send the child back to their parent(s). You may work on re-establishing a relationship, or on reunification at a pace that is best for the child.
- ◆ **Do I have to allow visits?** If there is no court-ordered visitation, you do not need to schedule visits. You may decide to begin by meeting at a neutral place such as a restaurant or playground. *It is ok* to eliminate contact with the parents if the visits are disruptive or harmful. *It is ok* to tell a child that even though their mother/father wants to see them, the problems and behaviors are too upsetting, so for now there will be no visits. *It is ok* to say no to overnight visits.



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- ◆ **Can I set rules for interaction?** *It is ok* to give the parents a set of rules for behavior they must follow if they want to be part of the child's life. These rules may vary depending on the situation, but might include being drug free for a year, holding down a job, or having a suitable place to live. It's important to understand that in these days of cell phones and social media, it may be impossible to prevent a parent from contacting the child, and this should be part of the discussion.

It can be helpful to discuss the situation with a counselor or therapist—for both you and the children. TCN and Family Solutions Center are available to anyone in Greene County, and there are many other options out there. For something less formal, a close friend or the pastor at your church may be a good choice.

The Council's Kinship support group meets the second Tuesday morning of each month, and there are online support groups.

Raising somebody else's child is an admirable, loving commitment. If you become overwhelmed, please reach out—because you are not alone. Phone calls, emails, and home visits are always available. You can reach me at [susan.finster@gcco.org](mailto:susan.finster@gcco.org) or 937-376-5486.

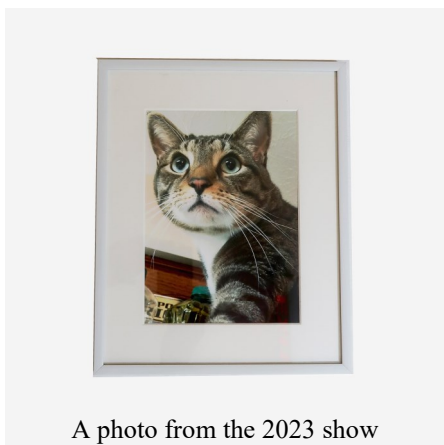
*Susan*

For more on parents in prison, visit <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents>

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## We Want Your Art!

Each year the Greene County Council on Aging and the Fairborn Art Association work together to showcase art created by local seniors. Artists have ranged in age from 60 to mid-90s, and the art includes watercolors, oils, pastels, photography, and much more. You do not need to be a professional. If you would like to submit art, contact us!



## Food & Clothing Pantries

In Greene County, 11% of the population has trouble getting enough food to live a healthy, active life. A list of local food pantries can be found in the GCCOA Service and Support Directory, which can be downloaded from our website at [www.gcco.org/directory](http://www.gcco.org/directory), or picked up at our office.



Clothing pantries offer used clothing at reasonable prices, or even for free. These can be helpful when a child hits a growth spurt and an inconvenient time for your budget! There are clothing pantries county-wide, including in Fairborn, Bellbrook, and several in Xenia. Some include toys, books, and even small appliances. Contact Susan at [susan.finster@gcco.org](mailto:susan.finster@gcco.org) or 937-376-5486 for more information.

## KPI Review

Ohio's *Kinship Permanency Incentive Program*, or KPI, is intended to provide initial financial support for minor children who are being cared for in a kinship situation. Funds include an initial larger payment, followed by a series of smaller payments at 6 month intervals, up to a total of 8 payments.

*There is no deadline for the initial application.*

Eligibility requirements:

- A court-issued order granting legal custody on or after July 1, 2005. Temporary or informal guardianship is not sufficient.
- The child must live with the kinship caregiver.
- Everyone 18 years or older in the home must complete a background check.
- If the placement was not made by an approved children services agency, the kinship family must undergo a home study (at no cost) prior to KPI approval.
- The gross income of the household cannot exceed 300% of federal poverty guidelines.

To request the KPI application packet, contact: Greene County Job and Family Services, 541 Ledbetter Road, Xenia, OH 45385 or call 937-562-6600

## Eclipse!

A little after 3:00pm on April 8th there will be a total solar eclipse in our area; the moon will cross in front of the sun. The next total eclipse over the U.S. won't happen for 21 years - 2045, and it won't be over Ohio. To see what happens during an eclipse, visit <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/total-solar-eclipse-what-to-see.html>

If you are interested in viewing the eclipse, it's best to start shopping for eclipse glasses right now. Sunglasses are not enough, no matter how dark they are. Read more by visiting <https://eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety>



## April Support Group & Lunch

In April, the RAP Kinship Support Group will meet at the Xenia Community Center, next door to the Council office. After our support meeting from 10 - 11:30 we'll take a short break and then enjoy a lunch together, finishing about 1:00. This is a great way to treat yourself to a little TLC. If you plan to attend, we'd appreciate knowing ahead of time, but it is not required. Contact us at [susan.finster@gcco.org](mailto:susan.finster@gcco.org), or call 937-376-5486.



# Kinship

1195 W Second St  
Xenia, OH 45385



## Upcoming Programs & Events

- ◆ **RAP Group (“Relatives As Parents” Support Group)**  
2nd Tuesday of each month (Feb 13, Mar 13, Apr 9, May 14), 10:00-11:30 am, GCCOA  
For details contact Susan Finster at 937-376-5486 x119 or [susan.finster@gccoa.org](mailto:susan.finster@gccoa.org)
- ◆ **Senior Artisan Show** March 10th, 17th & 20th.  
Sundays, March 10th & 17th, 1:00 - 3:30 pm  
Wednesday, March 20th, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm  
Fairborn Art Association Gallery
- ◆ **Drive-By Shredding Event**  
Saturday, April 13th, 9:00 am - Noon, Xenia Community Center



**CONTACT US:** The above programs are sponsored by the Greene County Council on Aging (GCCOA). For information on these programs, contact us at **937-376-5486** or [yourfriends@gccoa.org](mailto:yourfriends@gccoa.org).