

HOME ALONE GUIDELINES

The St. Croix County Department of Health and Human Services suggests that parents read this brochure before they make any decisions about leaving a child home alone.

It is also important to read this information before allowing older children to babysit younger children.

Reports alleging inadequate supervision or child care arrangements may be accepted for a child protection response, including:

- **Children age 7** and under who are left alone for any period of time
- **Children ages 8-10** who are left alone for more than 3 hrs
- **Children ages 11-13** who are left alone for more than 12 hrs
- **Children ages 14-15** who are left alone for more than 24 hrs
- **Children ages 16-17** may be left alone for over 24 hrs with a plan in place concerning how to respond to an emergency

Reports alleging inadequate child care arrangements may be screened in for a child protection response according to the following guidelines:

- **Children under age 11** should **not** provide child care (babysitting)
- **Children ages 11-15** who are placed in a child care role are subject to the same time restrictions of being left alone as listed above
- **Children ages 16-17** may be left alone for over 24 hours with adequate adult back-up supervision



AGE GUIDELINES

7 Years of Age and Younger: these children should never be left in a self-care arrangement (i.e. home alone).

8 to 11 Years of Age: these children may be able to handle a limited amount of self-care situations (i.e. home alone), assuming adequate precautions are taken - see list of questions below.

12 Years of Age and Older: these children usually can handle a broader range of self-care situations (i.e. home alone), assuming adequate precautions are taken. - see list of questions below.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR CHILD AND YOURSELF

Are You (As a Parent) Ready for Your Child to Stay Alone?

Does your child:

- Do you feel comfortable about your child staying home alone?
- Are you ready/are they ready for more freedom and independence?

Is Your Child Mentally Ready to Stay Alone?

Does your child:

- Know how to tell time?
- Know what to do in typical "emergencies" like a fire, power failure, illness or injury, prowler outside, etc.?
- Know when to call "911" and how to make a report? (Note: are emergency numbers posted?)
- Recognize potential "danger" in the home, outside, with strangers?
- Solve small problems on their own, but know when to get outside help?
- Know what to do if the telephone or doorbell rings?
- Have other responsibilities around the home?

Is Your Child Socially Ready to Stay Alone?

Does your child:

- Talk easily about school activities and their feelings?
- Feel confident enough to ask another adult in case of a problem?
- Obey house rules and understand the consequences of violations regarding friends and play time, or is he/she easily swayed by peer pressure?
- Solve conflicts with brothers/sisters with minimal help from adults?

Is Your Child Emotionally Ready to Stay Alone?

Does your child:

- Seem confident and secure about being home alone?
- Feel comfortable in the dark?
- Know how to appropriately handle loneliness, boredom, or fear?

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- Is your neighborhood safe?
- Is your home fairly clear of hazards for fires or accidentals falls?
- How long will the children be home alone—will this be over a mealtime?
- Parent should regularly check in with children
- Does your child have any special medical, physical, emotional needs?
- What appliances, if any, is your child allowed to use, e.g. TV, VCR, radio, microwave, stove, toaster, etc.?
- In case of actual emergency, is there an adult who lives nearby or who can be telephoned to go quickly to your home to check on the child? Have you discussed this with the child(ren)?