



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Crow Wing County Community Services Reminds Parents/Guardians of State Guidelines Regarding Leaving Children Alone**

Crow Wing County Community Services is reminding parents/guardians of the State guidelines regarding the ages of children who may be left alone.

With the end of the school year, many parents are seeking information about child care options during the summer months. For some families the additional financial obligation of child care is a factor in the stay-at-home versus child-care decision.

This time of year, Crow Wing County Community Services receives many calls from parents questioning how old a child needs to be to stay home alone or from concerned citizens reporting children being unsupervised.

Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines are used by child protection agencies in determining if a report regarding lack of supervision needs to be assessed by a social worker. Minnesota statute 626.556 addresses the issue of failure to provide necessary supervision or child care arrangements.

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

- 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 three hours.
- Children ages 11-13 who are left alone for more than 12 hours.
- Children ages 14-15 who are left alone for more than 24 hours.
- Children ages 16-17 may be left home alone for more than 24 hours with a plan in place concerning how to respond to an emergency.
- Children under the age of 11 should not provide child care.
- 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 who are placed in a child care role may be left alone for more than 24 hours with adequate adult back up supervision.

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**Our Mission:** Serve well. Deliver value. Drive results.

**Our Values:** Be responsible. Treat people right. Build a better future.

Modifying factors affecting screening decisions include:

- A child's mental ability and maturity level.
- The accessibility of the parent/guardian or designated caregiver to a child by phone and/or in person.
- The presence of intellectual deficits, psychological problems, or mental health concerns; existence of physical problems or disabilities.
- The behavioral history of a child, including suicidal thoughts or actions, fire setting, delinquency, vandalism or assault.
- A child's age, if using the kitchen stove, an iron or other appliance.
- Establishment of a well understood escape plan that has been worked out by the parent(s), or fire drill practice that has been rehearsed with a child; a working fire/smoke detector in the home.
- The presence of unusual hazards in the home.
- A child feeling confident and safe when left alone.

Additional information can be accessed by calling Child Care Assistance at (218) 824-1250 regarding available child care in your area and income based child care financial assistance; Child Protection Intake at (218) 824-1140 regarding the Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines; or visiting the Crow Wing County website at [www.crowwing.us](http://www.crowwing.us).

Community Services administers more than seventy federal and state benefit and assistance services and program to residents in Crow Wing County. The Department is dedicated to providing excellent service and efficient management in performing its mission of promoting and protecting the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of all Crow Wing County residents.

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