



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Crow Wing County Community Services Reminds Parents/Guardians of State Guidelines for Leaving Children Alone

Crow Wing County Community Services reminds parents and guardians of the Minnesota guidelines regarding the ages of children who may be left alone.

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

This time of year, Community Services receives many calls from parents asking how old a child need 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 to determine 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 childcare arrangements.

Reports alleging inadequate childcare 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 childcare.
- Children ages 11-15 who are placed in a childcare role are subject to the same time restrictions of being left alone as listed above.
- Children ages 16-17 who are placed in a childcare role may be left alone for more than 24 hours with adequate adult back up supervision.

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.

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- 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 crowwing.us

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