

PLAN A SCHEDULE TOGETHER

Discuss things your child can do when you are not there. Let your child choose the activities. Make a long list of "do's" and a short list of important "don'ts."

Checking in.

When your child arrives home, he or she should telephone you or a special adult to report he or she is safe.

Be available.

Always let your child know your schedule, when you will be at home, and where you can be reached until you arrive home. Your child needs to know how to tell time.

TALK ABOUT SAFETY.

Prepare your child to be safe every day. Make directions clear and simple. Post needed information in a place where it can easily be seen and read.

Provide a list.

Provide a list of important adults for your child to call. Include the fire department, police 911, a neighbor, a relative, and your workplace. Post a list of these important numbers by the telephone.

For fire.

Plan an escape route and practice using it. Tell your child to leave the house first, and call the fire department from a neighbor's home later.

For an injury.

Teach your child how to wash and bandage a cut, how to apply pressure if there is a lot of bleeding, how to pinch a nose for a nosebleed, and how and when to call 911.

FRIENDS AND VISITORS

Entering the home.

Your child must be able to keep track of keys and know how to lock and unlock doors easily.

If a visitor comes to the door or calls.

Tell your child to let in only people you have said may come in. Make certain your door has a peek hole to see who is at the door. Tell your child when he or she answers the phone, to say, "My mom (dad) is busy right now. May I take a message?" Instruct your child not to tell callers that he or she is home alone, unless your child is making a call for help. Decide if your child is allowed to play outside, go to the park, or go to a friend's home.

FIND OUT IF IT WORKS (OR IF YOU NEED TO MAKE A CHANGE)

The decision to leave your child home alone is a big one. Once your child is prepared to stay alone, set up a trial period to see how he or she adjusts. This will give both of you the chance to make other plans if either of you is uncomfortable.



PO Box 8005 301 South park 5th Floor Helena, MT 59604

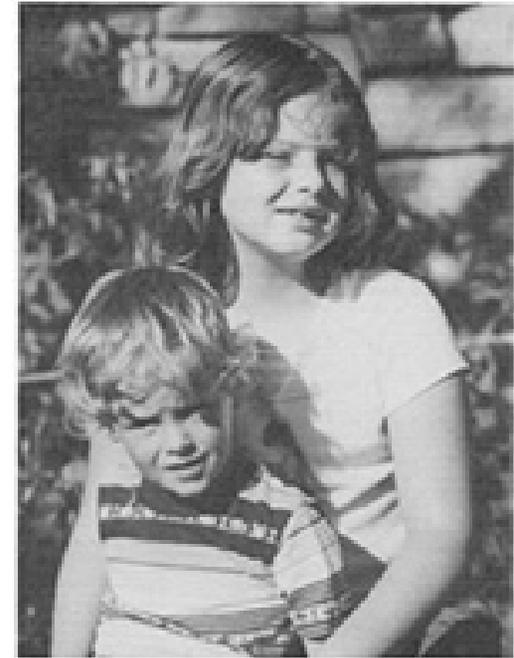
For more information on Child and Family Services Division programs, Please refer to the CFSD website

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>

CFS-024

Rev. 9/2010

Child Supervision Is Your Child Ready to be Home Alone



There is No Magic Age.

There is no magic age when children develop the maturity and good sense they need to stay home alone. Mature children in a neighborhood with several adult friends nearby may be all right alone for a few hours. For younger children, one hour may be too long. YOU need to decide if the time alone is too much, based on your child and your situation.

Review Your Child's Skills and Maturity

When you decide if your child is ready to stay home alone, consider his or her skills and maturity in 4 areas:

1. Is your child physically able to:
 - ◆ lock and unlock the doors and windows of your home? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ perform tasks such as fix a sandwich, dial the telephone, write a message? Yes___ No___
2. Can your child solve problems? Can your child:
 - ◆ tell time? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ understand what "stranger" and "emergency" mean? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ recognize danger and know how to stay safe? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ solve small problems alone, but know when and how to get help? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ understand how his or her actions affect others? Yes___ No___
3. Is your child socially ready to:
 - ◆ solve conflicts with siblings with little help from adults? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ talk easily to you about what happens at school, and about his or her feelings? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ feel comfortable enough to contact an adult if a problem comes up? Yes___ No___
4. Is your child emotionally ready to:
 - ◆ feel confident and secure when alone, and is willing to stay home alone? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ handle fears, loneliness, or boredom at home alone? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ handle responsibilities, such as getting ready for school on time? Yes___ No___
 - ◆ supervise others, such as looking out for younger siblings? Yes___ No___

If you answer "yes" to most of the questions above, your child shows signs of the physical, problem-solving, social, and emotional skills to stay home alone safely. Your child should be skilled in each of these 4 areas before he or she can be safe and secure in staying home alone. Whenever possible, ask your child to act out the situation and respond to it. Sometimes a child can give the right answer, but is not able to do what is needed.

Other Considerations.

Even if your child does seem mature enough to stay home alone, you need to think about some other factors:

◆ Is your home safe? Is your neighborhood safe? It's never a good idea to leave your child alone, if your home or neighborhood is not safe. ◆ How long will your child be alone each day?

◆ Is there an adult your child knows who is near your home and is willing to provide help if needed? Children must have an adult to call in an emergency, if they need a safe place to go in case of a lost key or a fire, or if they are frightened or injured.

◆ Does your child have special medical, physical, or emotional needs?

◆ Is your family going through a difficult period due to a recent move, divorce, or death?

Children who must care for siblings need to be older and more mature. Younger siblings must be comfortable about staying home without an adult.