



Human Services Department

Mark Quam, Executive Director
111 N. Jefferson Street, Green Bay, WI 54301
Phone: (920) 448-6001

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS ON CHILDREN BEING LEFT HOME ALONE

Brown County Human Services Department
Child Protection Intake Unit

CAUTION TO PARENTS

Every family situation is unique; and these guidelines will not cover all possible situations. The guidelines have two parts to them: [1] recommended ages and circumstances when a child **MAY** be left home alone; and [2] a series of questions for you to consider on whether your child **MAY** be able to handle staying home alone.

HOWEVER, please be aware that if the police or Child Protection gets a report that you child is not being adequately supervised, given their age; an investigation may be done by either or both agencies.

IF the investigation would find your child to be in an unsafe situation, the child **COULD** be taken into protective custody until other more suitable supervision is arranged.

IF YOU HAVE GENERAL OR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STATEMENTS ABOVE, PLEASE CONTACT CHILD PROTECTION INTAKE AT **920-448-6000**.

RECOMMENDED AGES AND CIRCUMSTANCES

NOTE: The age groupings below **ASSUME** there is only one child in the home. It has been our experience in Child Protection Intake that children should be **AT LEAST 12 YEARS OF AGE** (and preferably older) before they are permitted to **BABYSIT** younger brothers and sisters.

8 YEARS OF AGE AND YOUNGER

These children should **NEVER be left home alone.

9-11 YEARS OF AGE

These children MAY be able to handle **LIMITED AMOUNTS of time home alone, assuming adequate precautions are made for an emergency, back-up plan, AND the child meets the maturity guidelines on the following page.

12 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

These children **CAN USUALLY handle LONGER PERIODS OF TIME and MORE RESPONSIBILITY when home alone, assuming the same precautions and maturity guidelines are followed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER- IS YOUR CHILD READY TO STAY HOME ALONE?

IS YOUR CHILD **MENTALLY READY** TO STAY HOME ALONE? DOES YOUR CHILD...

- Know how to tell time?
- Know what to do in typical “emergencies,” like fire / power failure / illness or injury / prowler outside etc.?
- Know when to call 911 and know how to make a report?
- Recognize potential “danger” in the home / outside / with strangers?
- Know how to solve small problems on their own, but also know when to get help?
- Know what to do if the telephone or doorbell rings?
- Have any other responsibilities around the home when alone?

IS YOUR CHILD **SOCIALLY READY** TO STAY HOME 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 HOME ALONE? DOES YOUR CHILD...

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

ARE **YOU, AS A PARENT, READY** FOR YOUR CHILD TO STAY HOME ALONE? DO YOU...

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

OTHER POSSIBLE CONCERNS ABOUT THE **HOME ENVIRONMENT?**

- Is your neighborhood generally safe?
- Is your home fairly clear of hazards that might lead to a fire or an accidental fall?
- How long will the child be home alone...will it be over mealtime?
- Does your child have any special MEDICAL / PHYSICAL / EMOTIONAL / OR BEHAVIORAL needs?
- What appliances, if any, is your child allowed to use when home alone (examples) TV, DVD, radio, microwave, oven, stove, toaster, etc.?
- In case of an actual emergency, is there a trusted adult who lives nearby or who can be telephoned to quickly go to your home to check on the child?

HOME ALONE GUIDELINES / BCHSD / CPI-REVIEWED 01/10/06