

MN Child Supervision Guidelines

Minnesota law does not provide a specific age a child must be before they may be left home alone or left under the care of another child. There are general laws, however, that require adequate and appropriate supervision of children. Nobles County Community Services reviews concerns about child supervision and uses MN Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines based on MN Statute 626.556, to determine what unsafe supervision is. One of the most important ways to keep children safe is for children to be supervised by an adult or other responsible caregiver.

Child Protection may become involved with a family if the rules below are not followed:

1. Children under 8 are never left alone for any period of time.
2. Children ages 8-10 may be left alone for less than 3 hours.
3. Children ages 11-13 may be left alone for less than 12 hours
4. Children ages 14-15 may be left alone for less than 24 hours
5. Children ages 16-17 may be left alone for longer if there is a plan in place about how to respond to an emergency.

Age when children can babysit other children

Children under age 11 should not provide child care to other children. For children age 11 and older who are providing child care, the same limits apply to them based on their age as described above. For example, a 12- year-old who is babysitting still cannot be left alone more than 12 hours.

Other factors impact when children can be left alone

Age matters, but your child may need to be older depending on abilities, activities and environment. Child Protection may become involved if a child still seems unsafe alone, based on these factors:

- A child's age, mental ability, and maturity level
- Accessibility of the parent, guardian or designated caretaker to a child by phone and/or in person
- The presence of intellectual deficits, psychological issues, mental health concerns, and/or physical problems like illness or disabilities
- 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 appliances
- Fire safety, including a well-understood escape plan created by the parent/guardian, a fire drill rehearsed with a child, a working fire/smoke detector in the home
- Any unusual hazards in the home that reasonably cause extra risk, including unsecured/accessible firearms and ammunition
- If the child feels confident and safe when left alone

Use common sense

The bottom line for parents is to keep children safe by avoiding situations that fit the investigation or assessment criteria and to use common sense in all situations. Remember that leaving children home alone can be a risk, and parents should always do whatever they can to reduce the risks. Discuss emergency situations with your child if they are left unattended and make sure they can readily find you or a responsible adult quickly, if needed. A good idea is to have a list of emergency contacts for children somewhere easily accessible to them, such as on the refrigerator.

Questions?

Call Nobles County Social Services Child Protection Intake at 507-295-5213

Source: Minnesota Child Maltreatment Intake, Screening and Response Path Guidelines DHS-5144 12/15 and Minnesota Statutes 626.556, Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors, Nobles County Child Supervision