



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Crow Wing County Community Services Reminds Parents of State Guidelines Regarding Leaving Children Home Alone

Crow Wing County Community Services is reminding parents of the State guidelines regarding the ages of children who may be left at home 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. "We know parents want to protect their children," said Gwen Anderson, Health and Social Services Division Manager. "We want to provide parents with the guidelines so they can take the appropriate steps to safeguard them."

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 to 10 who are left alone for more than three hours.
- Children ages 11 to 13 who are left alone for more than 12 hours.
- Children ages 14 to 15 who are left alone for more than 24 hours.
- Children ages 16 to 17 may be left home alone for more than 24 hours with a plan in place concerning how to handle an emergency.
- Children under the age of 11 should not provide child care.
- Children ages 11 to 13 who are placed in a child care role may not do so for more than 12 hours.
- Children ages 14 to 15 who are placed in a child care role may not do so for more than 24 hours.

Modifying factors affecting screening decisions include:

- A child's mental ability and maturity level.

- The accessibility of the parent, guardian or designated caregiver to child by phone and/or in person.
- The presence of intellectual deficits, psychological problems or mental health concerns.
- The existence of physical problems or disabilities.
- The behavioral history of a child including suicidal thoughts or actions, fire setting, delinquency, vandalism or assault.
- The establishment of a well understood escape plan that has been worked out by the parent(s) or a fire drill practice that has been rehearsed with the child and the presence of a working fire or 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 Dawn DeVries at (218) 824-1253 regarding available child care in your area and income based child care financial assistance; Kirsten Morton-Aldous at (218) 824-1207 regarding the Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines; or visiting the Crow Wing County website at www.crowwing.us

Crow Wing County's Department of Community Services administers more than seventy federal and state benefit and assistance services and programs totaling more than \$130 million dollars annually. The Department is dedicated to providing excellent customer 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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Our Vision: Being Minnesota's favorite place.

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

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