



## HOW OLD IS OLD ENOUGH TO BE LEFT HOME ALONE?

There is no magical age for parents to use as to when it is safe to leave their children home alone. Parents need to use their own good judgment and their knowledge of their children to determine when and at what age it is appropriate to leave them home alone. The ability to feel safe, handle emergencies and be a responsible/reliable child is different from child to child. You can have some 14-15 year olds that cannot handle emergencies and are far from responsible.

With consideration of the above factors, Scott County uses the following guidelines for children who are unsupervised or who provide supervision to younger children.

1. Children age 7 and younger **always** need appropriate supervision.
2. Children ages 8-10 may be left alone for no more than 3 hours.
3. It may be acceptable for children 11-13 to be unsupervised or to babysit with the expectation that the parent, guardian, or caretaker will be returning within 12 hours.
4. It may be acceptable for children 14-15 to babysit or to be unsupervised with the expectation that the parent, guardian, or caregiver will be returning within 24 hours.
5. Parental judgment should be used in determining the need for supervision of older children. Children 16-17 who are left alone for over 24 hours should be provided with a plan on how to respond to an emergency. Children ages 16-17 may be considered to provide care for younger children for more than 24 hours if the whereabouts of the parent and when they are to return are known. There should also be adequate adult back up supervision.

Scott County uses a statewide established screening guide to help decide how old is old enough to be left home alone. This screening guide asks parents to look at the following factors before allowing your child to be left home alone or to babysit for another child.

- A. How long will they be left alone?
- B. What is maturity and intellectual level of the children?
- C. Is there another adult available to the child if they need help?
- D. What is the health or physical status of the children?
- E. Does the child have any behaviors?
- F. Will the child use a stove, iron or appliance, or something which could be dangerous?
- G. Have the parents discussed an escape plan, held a fire drill and discussed emergency safety procedures with the children?
- H. Does the residence have an operational smoke detector?

- I. Are there are unusual and/or dangerous hazards in the home?
- J. How does the child feel about being left alone?
- K. What are the ages and number of children in the home?
- L. Has the child completed a Babysitting Clinic?
- M. Is the person the parent has chosen to provide supervision reliable/capable?

**Never leave children alone in the car!!!!!!!!!!**