



As a parent or guardian, you are responsible for your children and their supervision until they are 16. Because you care for them every day, you are the best person to make decisions about when they can be left alone, and for how long. The expectation for you is to make these decisions based on the child's level of maturity and responsibility, and the individual circumstances.

WHAT LEGISLATION SAYS

"It is an offence under the Child and Family Services Act for any person who has charge of a child less than sixteen (16) years of age to leave the child unattended, without having made "reasonable provision" for the child's supervision and care"

— 79(3) of the Child and Family Services Act.

Please connect with the following community partners and resources to access programs that help prepare your child to stay alone including home alone programming and babysitting courses.

Action First Aid
(705) 720-2978
actionfirstaid.ca

Seconds Saves Lives
(705) 739-8174
thebabysittingcourse.ca

Canadian Red Cross
Simcoe Muskoka Branch
(705) 721-3313
redcross.ca

St. John's Ambulance
Barrie Simcoe Muskoka Branch
(705) 726-0991
sja.ca

First for Safety
(705) 526-3853
firstforsafety.ca

YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka
(705) 726-6421
ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca

Orillia First Aid
(705) 558-1666
orilliafirstaid.com

Your local recreation program activity guide

60 Bell Farm Road, Unit 7
Barrie, Ontario L4M 5G6

T (705) 726-6587
F (705) 726-9788
TF 1-800-461-4236

f /SMFConnexions @SMFConnexions

familyconnexions.ca



Simcoe Muskoka
Family Connexions

Leaving your child HOME ALONE

Helping you make the best decisions for the supervision of your children.

Safe kids. Healthy families.
Strong communities.





OUR ADVICE ABOUT AGE

- A child under the age of 10 should not be left alone. Although you may have taught your child what to do in certain situations, a child under 10 does not have the ability to make judgments and decisions necessary to care for themselves alone.
- A child should be at least 12 years of age before they are permitted to care for younger children. A babysitting course for this child is also recommended.

A PROCESS NOT AN EVENT

Being home alone should be a process that is initiated in gradual and supervised stages. Start with small periods of time, and slowly increase with the child's skills and growing maturity level. Make sure that at all times your child is remotely supervised, supported, and has direct access to assistance in difficult or frightening situations.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- The child's age
- Particular child's level of maturity and stage of development
 - The time of day and length of time child is left alone
 - Child's comfort level in being left alone
- Child's knowledge of emergency situations
 - If the child has taken a home alone or babysitting course
- Periods of family stress, such as separation, a move or death of a family member, are not good times to begin to leave your child alone. If you are not sure if it's time for your child to be home alone, it isn't.

RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAMES

- 10-12 years: Short periods of indirect supervision of 1-2 hours may be acceptable for this age range.
- 13-14 years: Longer periods of indirect supervision of 2-5 hours are acceptable for this age range.
- 15-16 years: At this age, the child may be able to be left alone for a full day.

These are guidelines only. Every child and situation is different, and should be assessed individually.

PREPARE YOUR CHILD

If you decide your child is old enough and responsible enough to be left alone, develop a safety plan with your child.

Teach your child to deal with a variety of situations. When leaving them alone, ensure they understand the following:

- How to answer the door and telephone
- Where to find important telephone numbers
- How to make an emergency call to 911 including how to say their name, address, phone number, and any medical conditions or allergies they may have
- The name and contact of a trusted neighbour they can go to for help
- How to tell time and when you plan to be home
- Where to find a flashlight and other safety items in case of a power outage

SAFETY HINTS FOR PARENTS

To find out how much your child knows about what to do in specific situations, play the "What if..." game. Describe or act out (role play) things that could happen while your child is home alone.

Here are some sample questions to ask your child:

- What would you do if there is a fire?
- What would you do if you were really hungry?
- What would you do if you were scared or hurt?
- What would you do if the lights went out?
- What would you do if you got locked out?

MEASURE YOUR CHILD'S ABILITY

- Has the child demonstrated the ability to take care of himself or herself? Can he/she get dressed, find safe activities, and able to follow instructions?
- Does the child demonstrate good judgement and have experience working out problems independently?
- Does the child have special needs that might make it difficult for him/her to perform tasks, such as going to the washroom, calling for help, or getting out of the home in an emergency?
- Does the child have any behavioural issues identified by you, the school, or a doctor that would pose a risk to the child or others if left alone? For example, children who have a history of self-harm, aggression, fire setting, wandering from home, inability to concentrate and follow direction could pose a risk to themselves or others if left unsupervised.
- If the child requires one-to-one help at school from a support worker or teaching assistant, it may not be wise to leave him/her alone at home without direct supervision.

Remember that you are responsible to ensure your child's care and safety at all times.