

A Checklist for Leaving Older Children Home Alone

Physically, is your child able to:

- Lock and unlock doors and windows in your home?
- Do self-care tasks, such as making a sandwich, dialing the phone and writing messages?

Mentally, does your child:

- Tell time?
- Recognize danger and know when to get help?
- Understand clearly what "STRANGER" and "EMERGENCY" mean?
- Solve problems on his or her own?
- Consider how his or her actions affect others?

Socially, does your child:

- Solve conflicts with siblings with little help from adults?
- Talk easily to you about school, friends and about his or her feelings?
- Feel confident enough to contact an adult if a problem arises?

Emotionally, does your child:

- Feel confident and secure when alone?
- Seem willing to stay alone for short periods? For longer periods?
- Know how to handle fear, loneliness or boredom?
- Handle responsibilities, such as going to school on time?
- Know how to look out for younger siblings?

Before you leave your child, show them:

- Where things are in the house and how they work (furnace, circuit breaker, etc).
- Where the flashlight and first aid kit are located.
- Things in the house that may make strange noises.
- How to be safe in the kitchen, including turning off the stove.
- Who to call or where to go if there is a problem.
- What they need to do as soon as they get home (lock the door, call you, etc).
- What gas smells like when it is leaking (if applicable) and what to do.

Practice with your child:

- Safe ways to answer the phone and the door.
- How to get out if there is a fire.
- Locking and unlocking doors.

Prepare for your child:

- A phone list of people they know well, whom they can call if they need help.
- A list of house rules (for moments when friends arrive at the door).
- Healthy snack foods they can prepare without cooking.
- An extra key hidden outside in case they lock themselves out.
- Fun things for each child to do when they get home.
- Leave on lights or radio as pre-planned with them.

Protect your child:

- Lock up medicines, alcohol and weapons.
- Install smoke detectors and make sure they work.
- Let them know what time you will be home; call if you will be late.
- Ask them how things went; allow them to suggest changes in these plans.

If your child is not ready to be home alone, contact Care About Childcare at Children's Service Society for free child care referrals at 801-355-4847 or 866-438-4847 or visit CareAboutChildcare.utah.gov.