

- Feel comfortable being home alone at night?
- Know how to appropriately handle loneliness, boredom or fear?

Are you as a parent ready for your child to stay alone or babysit?

- Do you feel comfortable and confident about your child staying home alone or babysitting? (Are there economic or job related pressures to leave your child home alone? Is there pressure from your child to be left alone without adult supervision?)
- Are you ready for your child's increased freedom & independence?
- Is the neighborhood safe?
- Is your home safe?
- Have you posted important phone numbers for your child to easily find?
- Are you comfortable with the amount of self care time and the time of day your child will be home alone?
- Have you established clear expectations and household rules?
- Does your child have special medical/physical/emotional needs?

**GUIDELINES
FOR
PARENTS
ON CHILDREN
BEING
HOME ALONE**

**Endorsed by the
Marathon County
Citizen Review Panel**



The Marathon County Department of Social Services suggests that parents read this information before they make decisions about leaving a child home alone. It is also important to read this information before allowing older children to babysit.

The Marathon County Department of Social Services reviews these guidelines to make decisions about how to respond to reports that are made to the agency. These decisions include whether or not Social Services or Law Enforcement will investigate a report that a child is not ready to be home alone or is not ready to be taking care of other children. If left alone, a child may be taken from home (also called “protective custody”) until a safety plan is made.

The Marathon County Department of Social Services understands that every family is different and works with each family individually.

For information on child care resources or classes, call **United Way First Call for Help** at 211.

For further information, call **Marathon County Social Services** (715) 261-7500.

Wisconsin State Statutes do not specifically address the age and circumstances when a child can be left without adult supervision. The Children’s Code 48.981(1)(d) defines “CHILD NEGLECT” as failure, refusal or inability on the part of a parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

AGE GUIDELINES

8 YEARS OF AGE AND YOUNGER

The agency does not recommend this age group be left home alone for any period of time.

9 TO 10 YEARS OF AGE

These children may be able to handle being home alone for short periods of time. This assumes parents have prepared children and the household ahead of time. The agency does not recommend this age group provide care for younger siblings or other children without appropriate supervision. Parents still should carefully consider the time of day & amount of time involved as well as the responsibilities the child will have.

11 to 12 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER

These children usually can handle a broader range of home alone time and can provide care for other children. This assumes parents have prepared children and the household ahead of time. Parents still should carefully consider the time of day & amount of time involved as well as the responsibilities the child will have.

THINGS FOR PARENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING IF A CHILD IS READY TO BE HOME ALONE OR READY TO BABYSIT

How mature is your child? Does your child:

- Know to Dial 911 in an emergency?
- Know how to tell time?
- Solve small problems but know when to get outside help?
- Know what to do if the telephone or doorbell rings?
- Recognize potential danger in and outside the home?
- Successfully complete other job responsibilities around the home?
- Has your child successfully completed a “Home Alone” or “Babysitting Preparation” class?

Is your child socially & emotionally ready to stay alone or babysit? Does your child:

- Obey household and school rules?
- Understand consequences of rule violations involving friends and playtime?
- Feel confident enough to contact an adult if a problem arises?
- Solve routine conflicts with siblings?
- Talk easily about school activities and his/her feelings?
- Seem confident and secure about being home alone or “in charge”?