

CHILD SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Fairfax County
Department of Family Services



Department of Family Services
Child Protective Services

703-324-7400
TTY 703-222-9452

For information on child care resources,
call 703-449-9555



Keeping Kids Safe

the Blue Ribbon Campaign to
prevent child abuse and neglect.

Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request by calling 703-324-7400; TTY 703-222-9452. To request this information in an alternate format, please call 703-324-5870; TTY 703-222-9452.

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The following represent minimally acceptable standards for the supervision of children. These guidelines have been developed by social work professionals in collaboration with the community.

Whenever any child is unsupervised/unattended the following should apply:

- There must be no emotional, medical, or behavioral problems that affect judgment or decision-making skills.
- The child must be comfortable being alone.
- Youth must have a safety plan worked out with the parent/ caretaker that includes:
 1. How to access a parent or other responsible adult at all times (including knowing the parent/ caretaker's whereabouts and having a telephone number where the parent can be reached).
 2. What to do in case of an emergency.
 3. Guidelines for acceptable behavior.
 4. Knowledge of emergency telephone numbers.
- Youth must demonstrate the ability to follow the safety plan and to make decisions that reflect concern for personal safety.

**REMEMBER,
these are guidelines**

There may be situations, even within these guidelines, when it is not safe to leave a child unsupervised. Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child's safety.

Child Supervision Guidelines

7 years & under - Should not be left alone for any period of time. This may include leaving children unattended in cars, backyards, and playgrounds. The determining consideration should be the dangers in the environment and the ability of the caretaker to intervene.

8 to 10 years - Should not be left alone for more than 1½ hours and only during daylight and early evening hours.

11 to 12 years - May be left alone for up to 3 hours, but not late at night or in circumstances requiring inappropriate responsibility.

13 to 15 years - May be left unsupervised, but not overnight.

16 to 17 years - May be left unsupervised (in some cases, for up to two consecutive overnight periods).

