

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | May 20, 2021

## **As summer approaches, agencies share guidance for parents wondering if their children are ready to stay home alone**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Summer is fast approaching, and parents may be wondering if children are ready to stay home alone and when it is safe for children to be without adult supervision.

Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota and the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division have an informational brochure available online and in print called *Home Alone: Is Your Child Ready?* that provides guidance and answers some common questions about child supervision. The brochure is available on the department's website at [www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/cfs/brochure-home-alone.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/cfs/brochure-home-alone.pdf).

North Dakota does not have a state law that specifies the age a child can stay home alone. Age is not the only factor parents should consider when making their decision.

The department's child protection services administrator Marlys Baker said, "The human service zones follow guidelines when they receive reports of children who are inadequately supervised. We encourage parents not only to talk to their children about safe 'home alone' strategies, but to also test the child's knowledge by asking questions about what the child would do if a stranger knocks at the door, or if friends come over and break the rules in their house."

Baker said the brochure outlines factors parents should consider in their decision-making, including age, emotional well-being and maturity, length of time their child would be alone, along with the time of day or night. Parents may also want to consider any physical, emotional or mental limitations a child may have, and whether a parent or other trusted adult is readily accessible if needed. The brochure also touches on other considerations such as self-care and home safety strategies.

Baker said that if families make their decision with these factors in mind, it can help create a more positive experience for both parents and children.

"Communication also plays an important role in determining a child's ability to stay home alone," said Baker. "Parents should ask their child how they feel about staying home alone. If there is any hesitation, parents may want to wait until their child is more prepared. Never assume a child is ready to be unsupervised just because he or she is age 12 or 13."

Parents and caregivers with questions on child supervision guidelines can also contact their local human service zone office. Contact information is at [www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/).

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One of the department's key priorities is strong, stable families. The department's Children and Family Services Division works closely with the human service zones, PCAND, North Dakota State University Extension Service, and other public and private partners to promote child safety and well-being.

Parents who decide a child is not ready to be unsupervised can get help finding licensed, regulated child care through Child Care Aware of North Dakota.

For individualized help finding child care, parents can reach a referral specialist by calling 800-997-8515, or parents can choose to use CCAoND's online child care provider search tool at <https://ndchildcare.org/parents>. The website also offers helpful resources such as tips on choosing child care, information about child development, child care assistance that is available to help many working families with the cost of child care as well as other information.

Parents are their children's first teachers. Agency partners at PCAND and the NDSU Extension Service Parent Resource Centers also offer helpful information and training opportunities for parents and other caregivers. Details can be found on their websites: [www.pcand.org](http://www.pcand.org) and <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pen>.

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