

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | May 24, 2022

## **Agencies offer guidance for parents wondering if a child is ready to stay home alone**

BISMARCK, N.D. – With the start of summer break, some parents may be thinking about whether their children can stay home alone safely without adult supervision.

To support strong families and assist parents, the North Dakota Department of Human Services and partner community agency Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota have a resource online titled *Home Alone: Is Your Child Ready?* that provides some general guidance and answers common questions about child supervision.

Parents may want to keep these factors and others in mind when considering whether a child is ready for less supervision:

- Length of time a child will be home alone.
- Child's overall maturity, behavior and judgement.
- Whether the child feels confident and prepared.
- What safety risks exist (fires, accidents, burglaries, etc.) and whether the child knows what actions to take to be safe.
- Whether the child is prepared to resist peer pressure if friends encourage the child to break rules.
- Whether the child has internet access and knows how to be safe online while at home unsupervised.

While North Dakota does not have a state law that specifies the age a child can stay home alone, the department has developed guidelines, which are used by the human service zones in North Dakota. For example, children ages newborn to eight should be supervised at all times by a parent or other adult caregiver. A nine-year-old may be mature enough to be alone for up to two hours during the day, but never at night, and should not supervise other children, according to the guidelines.

Child Abuse Prevention/Protection Administrator Kirsten Hansen said, "A child's age is not the only factor parents should consider when deciding if a child is ready to be home alone. Is a parent or other trusted adult readily accessible if needed? Never assume a child is ready to be unsupervised just because he or she is age 12 or 13."

A full list of factors to consider, safety tips, and guidelines are available online 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).

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One of the department's key priorities is strong, stable families. The department's Children and Family Services Division and Early Childhood Division work 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 [ndchildcare.org/parents/find-child-care/search.html](https://ndchildcare.org/parents/find-child-care/search.html). The website also offers helpful 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 and 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](https://www.pcand.org) and [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pen](https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pen).

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