

Supervision Guidelines



Are you wondering about leaving your child with at home alone? Or wondering if your child is old enough to babysit?

We frequently receive inquiries about the guidelines and legal responsibilities in supervising children, hiring babysitters, or leaving children unattended.

Am I required
to supervise
my child at
all times?

Each situation is different and must be assessed individually, and here are some basic guidelines to help you in making the best decision for the supervision of your children.

According to the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), any child under 10 years of age, left alone, is automatically considered to be at risk.

CAS's are mandated by the Ontario government to provide child protection services, under the Child & Family Services Act. This legislation states that, "No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances." The legislation also states that, "No parent of a child less than sixteen years of age shall permit the child to loiter in a public place between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m."

This means that it is the parents' responsibility to care for, and to ensure the safety of, their children at all times. It also means that it is an offence to leave any child unattended without making reasonable arrangements for every situation for the child's supervision, care and safety. Failure to do so may result in criminal charges being laid.

In making arrangements for someone else to care for your child, consider the following:

1. Age of the child to be babysat, and the age and maturity of the babysitter.
2. Number of children to be babysat. (Can he/she handle more than one child?)
3. Behaviour of the children, their temperament and health.
4. The babysitter's ability to manage the children, and for what length of time.
5. Safety of the home in which the babysitting is taking place.
6. Proximity to other adults (other than you).
7. Can you be reached in case of an emergency?
8. Am I comfortable with a male or a female babysitter?
9. Is my child comfortable with a male or female babysitter?

Is there a
legal age for
babysitting?

Important: While a child may be able to care for him/herself for a short period of time, he/she may not be able to care for one or more other children.

In deciding whether or not to leave your child alone, consider the following:

1. The age of the child.
2. The behaviour of the child, his/her temperament and health.
3. How long is the child going to be left alone?
4. Does the child know where you will be and how they can reach you?
5. Who is the emergency contact person for the child and how can they be reached?
6. Does the child know the rules they are to follow when you are not there?

It is your job to teach your child the right rules for any emergency situation and what to do when you are not present.

Talk to your children about who they can call for help, what to do if they are scared, and what to do if someone calls or comes to the door. Write this information down, and keep it handy for the children when alone. **See “Home Alone” for information on how to prepare children.**

Do not allow your child to stay home alone if you are uncomfortable about it or if you think he/she is not ready.

You are responsible for your child's care and safety at all times.

Recommended Guidelines for Leaving a Child Alone

Infant - 9 years

A child of this age should not be left unsupervised at any time of the day or night. A competent caregiver should be on the same premises as the children.

10 -12 years*

Short periods of indirect supervision of 1-2 hours may be acceptable for this age range. These short periods of indirect supervision may be provided by an adult in the next house or apartment-- if the adult is aware of the parents' absence, and agrees to look in on the child during specified periods of time. Please note that indirect supervision via telephone contact is generally unacceptable for this age range.

13 - 14 years*

Longer periods of indirect supervision (2 - 5 hours) are acceptable for this age range. An adult/babysitter should be available by telephone to the children in case of an emergency, or if the child requires assistance.

15 - 16 years*

At this age, the child should be able to be left alone for a full day. The parent should be readily available by telephone to the child in case of an emergency.

*Refer to “Home Alone” for guidelines on preparing children to be on their own.

Checklist for your babysitter
In an emergency: Call 911

Home address:

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Home phone #:

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Mother's name:

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Mother's work #

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Father's name:

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Father's work #:

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Doctor:

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Other people I can call if I need help:

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Parent's whereabouts:

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When parents are expected
home:.....

Medication the children
need:.....

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Other medical concerns about the
children:.....

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Health insurance #:

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Other:

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Checklist for your child if
he or she is at home alone
In an emergency: Call 911

Home address:

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Home phone #:

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Mother's name:

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Mother's work #

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Father's name:

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Father's work #:

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Doctor:

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Other people I can call if I need help:

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People I can let in:

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If I get scared I can:

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If someone phones I will:

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If someone comes to the door I will:

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Parent's whereabouts:

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When parents are expected
home:.....

Other:

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**These are guidelines only.
Every child and situation is different, and should be assessed individually.**