

# DFCS Guidelines for the Supervision of Children

## Discussion

Use the following guidelines for determining the level of neglect that exists when children are alone without adult supervision.

- Children eight years or younger should not be left alone;
- Children between the ages of nine years and twelve years, based on level of maturity, may be left alone for brief (less than two hours) periods of time; and,
- Children thirteen years and older, who are at an adequate level of maturity, may be left alone and may perform the role of babysitter, as authorized by the parent, for up to twelve hours.

These guidelines pertain only to children who are not in the department's custody. Situations involving children for whom the department has placement responsibility are governed by foster care requirements.

## Procedures/Practice Issues

There are sometimes circumstances where an unsupervised older child is at risk or where a younger child has the maturity level to be left alone or to care for other children. Some examples are:

- It may not be advisable to leave an older child who has a special condition or disability alone. Discuss individual case situations with the supervisor.
- Consideration may be given to a child younger than 13 years, who exhibits strong maturity skills and has participated in a course on babysitting, to be alone or to care for other children. Verify that the child participated in the skills class and discuss with the supervisor to determine if a neglectful situation exists.

### ***Suggested questions to ask are:***

- Does the child know the emergency plan for the family?
- Does the child know the parent's phone numbers (work and home)?
- Can the child demonstrate the plan and recite the numbers?
- What is the availability of the parent during this time?
- Are there environmental factors that add further risk to the situation?
- Are there factors that reduce risk, i.e. supportive/available neighbors?