

Is Your **Child** Ready to **Stay Home Alone**?



Virginia state laws do not give an age limit for leaving children unsupervised at home. Age, alone, is not a good indicator of a child's maturity level. Instead, consider the following questions before leaving your child home alone:



Maturity Matters

- » Is your child physically and emotionally ready to care for themselves?
- » Are they aware of dangers and know emergency plans?
- » Does your child have any special needs or behavioral issues that may add risks?



The Situation

- » How long and how often will you leave your child unsupervised?
- » How safe is your home and neighborhood?
- » Have you made an emergency plan with nearby adults?
- » Is there any history of abuse or neglect that would affect how an unsupervised accident would impact your custody?



Physical Distance

- » Will you or another parental figure be able get home quickly?
- » Does your child know where you are and how to contact you in case of an emergency?



Other Considerations:

- Some local areas may have specific rules about the age at you can leave a child alone. Do more research before your child reaches this milestone.
- A child who can take care of themselves may still not be ready to care for younger children.

If you think your child isn't quite ready to be home alone, find child care options in your area by visiting: www.dss.virginia.gov/find-care



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