

# Guidelines for the Supervision of Children

## ***Wondering about leaving your child at home alone?***

We frequently receive inquiries about the guidelines and legal responsibilities in supervising children, hiring babysitters, or leaving children unattended. Each situation is different and must be assessed individually. Here are some basic guidelines to help you in making the best decision for the supervision of your children.

Durham CAS is mandated by the Ontario government to provide child protection services in Durham Region, 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 is an offence to leave a 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.

## ***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 child.

### ***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 child 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.

**Please note:  
*These are guidelines only.***

**Every child and every  
situation is different, and  
should be assessed  
individually.**

**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 to 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.

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

**Keep a checklist near the phone for your children and the babysitter. Include all emergency numbers, where you can be reached, where other adults can be reached, etc.**

**For a detailed checklist that you can print and keep posted when you go out, please visit our website:  
[www.durhamcas.ca](http://www.durhamcas.ca)**

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

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

1. The 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 child, 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?

**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.**



1320 Airport Blvd., Oshawa, Ontario, L1H 7K4  
Ph: 905.433.1551  
Fax: 905.433.0603

[durhamcas@durhamcas.ca](mailto:durhamcas@durhamcas.ca)  
[www.durhamcas.ca](http://www.durhamcas.ca)