Checklist for Leaving Older Children Home Alone

Physically, is your child able to:

☐ Lock and unlock doors and windows in your home?
☐ Do self-care tasks, such as making a sandwich, dialing the phone and writing messages?

Mentally, does your child:

☐ Tell time?
☐ Recognize danger and know when to get help?
☐ Understand clearly what “STRANGER” and EMERGENCY” mean?
☐ Solve problems on his or her own?
☐ Consider how his or her actions affect others?

Socially, does your child:

☐ Solve conflicts with siblings with little help from adults?
☐ Talk easily to you about school, friends and about his or her feelings?
☐ Feel confident enough to contact an adult if a problem arises?

Emotionally, does your child:

☐ Feel confident and secure when alone?
☐ Seem willing to stay alone for short periods? For longer periods?
☐ Know how to handle fear, loneliness or boredom?
☐ Handle responsibilities, such as going to school on time?
☐ Know how to look out for younger siblings?

Before you leave your child show them:

☐ Where things are in the house and how they work (furnace, circuit breaker, etc.).
☐ Where the flashlight and first aid kit are located.
☐ Things in the house that may make strange noises.
☐ How to be safe in the kitchen, including turning off the stove.
☐ Who to call or where to go if there is a problem.
☐ What they need to do as soon as they get home (lock the door, call you, etc.).
☐ What gas smells like when it is leaking (if applicable) and what to do.

Practice with your child:

☐ Safe ways to answer the phone and the door.
☐ How to get out if there is a fire.
☐ Locking and unlocking doors.

Prepare for your child:

☐ A phone list of people they know well, whom they can call if they need help. A list of house rules (for moments when friends arrive at the door).
☐ Healthy snack foods they can prepare without cooking.
☐ An extra key hidden outside in case they lock themselves out. Fun things for each child to do when they get home.
☐ Leave on lights or radio as pre-planned with them.

Protect your child:

☐ Lock up medicines, alcohol and weapons.
☐ Install smoke detectors and make sure they work.
☐ Let them know what time you will be home; call if you’ll be late.
☐ Ask them how things went; allow them to suggest changes in these plans.