

and have some general knowledge of what their child is doing. That continues through the teen years.

- Anytime a parent arranges for a substitute caretaker/babysitter, the parent is responsible for making safe arrangements. A parent needs to know the babysitter well enough to know this person will protect the child from harm, supervise and provide the level of care needed.
- Some children can stay by themselves for short periods beginning around age 10. A parent needs to be sure their child can follow safety rules, the child knows who to contact in an emergency, and that a responsible adult is available to respond immediately if needed. Some children are not ready to stay by themselves until they are 12 or older.
- Before an older child/youth begins babysitting for younger children, he or she needs to have the skills to care for the younger children and to know what to do if someone gets hurt, a fire starts, etc. The young babysitter always needs a way of reaching the parent and another adult who can respond immediately with help or advice, if needed. Usually a child is around 13 before he/she is ready to begin this level of responsibility.

## Discipline

Parents have the responsibility to teach their children how to behave while at home and in the community. It is important that parents expect children to behave according to their age and development.

- Discipline children only for behavior they have the capacity to control, not what is accidental or out of their control. For example, you would not discipline a baby for crying.
- Encourage and reward a child for behavior you want to see continue and increase.

- Learn a variety of discipline methods that work to teach a child how to behave.
- Never use a punishment, such as spanking, hitting, whipping, pinching or switching, that results in any injury (includes marks or bruises).

### NEVER SHAKE or THROW a baby.

- Do not allow others to discipline your child in a way that might injure (leave any mark or bruise) your child.
- Do not force a child to eat food or drink liquids in large amounts.
- Do not lock a child in a closet or room. Do not restrain a child with belts, ropes, duct tape or any other means.
- Do not prevent your child from sleeping, eating, or drinking water as a form of punishment.
- Do not scald, bite, choke, suffocate or harm your child as a method of discipline.

To report child abuse or neglect, or for more information on Child Protective Services, call 828-324-9111 any time.

**CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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## A GUIDE FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE



## A Guide for Keeping Children Safe

Catawba County's  
Minimum Community Standards  
of Care



To strengthen, with dignity and respect, the quality of life for all citizens through supportive services and advocacy



# A Guide for Keeping Children Safe

An overview of minimum community standards to keep children safe

## Care

### A parent or caretaker is providing suitable or minimally sufficient care when:

- A home is clean enough to not cause children to get sick or have infections.
- A home has safe heating and ventilation and little risk of fire hazards.
- There is a safe place for the child to sleep.
- The child is provided food to stay healthy.
- The child receives medical and dental care, especially if there is pain.
- The child receives special services when recommended to assure good health, growth and the ability to learn.
- All caretakers expect behaviors from the child based realistically on the child's age and abilities.
- A child is enrolled in school by age 7 and attends school each day.
- Basic cleanliness needs are met to prevent lice, ringworm, etc. A child learns how to take a bath, brush his/her teeth, etc.
- A child has clothing in good enough condition for the weather and daily activities.
- The parent protects a child from people who are violent or who make bad

decisions that may place the child at risk of harm.

- The parent protects a child from **anyone** who imposes behavior of a sexual nature on a child. This includes, but is not limited to, suggestive comments or behaviors, contact with a registered sex offender, child pornography, fondling or penetration.
- A parent makes a specific plan with a suitable adult who can assure the safety and well being of a child when a parent is unable or unwilling to do so.
- A parent remains financially responsible to support their child even if the child does not live with them.
- Parents do not encourage or allow a youth to live with someone with whom the youth is having a sexual relationship.
- A child up to age 11 is not exposed to firearms nor has access to firearms. There are some special circumstances when a child under 12 might use firearms with careful adult supervision and instruction. After age 12, children continue to need adult supervision when allowed to have access or use firearms. A fatal accident can occur in seconds.
- A parent uses words that build a child up, not words that belittle or scare him/her.
- A parent does not encourage or force a child to participate in any sort of criminal or illegal behavior.

- A child is not exposed to a pattern of violence in the home.
- A child is not exposed to unsafe behaviors that can be caused by illegal or prescription drugs, or alcohol.

## Supervision

**More children die or experience serious injury due to poor supervision than from actual abuse. The level of supervision that a child needs depends on age and what the child can understand about safety. A child depends on you to recognize dangers and keep them safe.**

- Young children, especially those 5 and under, need careful supervision. When a young child is awake and active, a parent or caretaker needs to have sight and sound supervision of that child.
- Children around the age of 6 may play outside without constant supervision, but a lot depends on the environment or neighborhood. This age child needs a caretaker to check on them frequently and have an awareness of where the child is and what he or she is doing.
- Around age 10, a child may play outside or in the neighborhood by themselves. A parent needs to know where their child is