

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This document provides Child Supervision Considerations to help you make informed decisions regarding the following circumstances:

1. Pre-Teen Leaving After School Program Independently
 - Pre-teens who are at least 10 years of age may be eligible to attend RisingOaks' after school program for a portion of the time after school and to then sign themselves out and depart from the program on their own. This may not be appropriate for every child or every family and there are many things to consider before deciding if your child and family is ready for this level of independence.
2. Adding a Youth under Age 16 to your Authorized Pick-Up List,
 - You may wish to add a youth between the ages of 12 to 15 to your younger child's authorized pick up list.

Family & Children's Services of the Waterloo Region provide the following guidelines on its website:

Child Supervision Guidelines Is your child ready to be left alone?

Considering when to leave your child at home alone for a few hours is an important decision. It may be helpful to know that the Child and Family Services Act Considering 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."

You need to ensure supervision and care that is sufficient for the child, taking into account your child's age and his or her developmental level. It's also important to consider the length of time and time of day your child will be unsupervised, as well as the following questions:

- Has your child shown you that they can take care of himself or herself?
- Can your child find safe activities to do?
- Can your child remember instructions and follow them?
- Does your child show good judgement and have experience working out problems independently?
- Does your child know what to do in an emergency?
- Does your child have special needs that make it difficult for them to take care of himself or herself?
- Can your child seek help right away, or get out of your home in an emergency?
- Does your child have any behaviours that may be a problem if her or she is left alone?
- Are there risks in your home or environment such as dangerous substances, machinery or potential fire or water hazards?

Your commitment

When your child is home alone, or at home with a young babysitter under age 16, there must be a fast and easy way for them to reach you. You must be able to help quickly or arrange for another responsible adult to help the child/young babysitter in case of an emergency.

You must make sure your child or young babysitter is ready to handle any emergency that might happen while he or she is alone, like a fire, a flooded toilet, injury or other emergency. They need you to coach them about what to do when someone knocks on the door or calls for you on the telephone when you are not home. You will need to make clear rules about when (or if) friends can come over when you are out.

Periods of family stress such as separation or divorce, moving, or the death of a family member, are not good times to begin leaving your child alone or with a young babysitter under the age of 16. Wait until your child feels settled again before leaving them alone for the first time.

Your child's environment

Consider where you live. Do you feel that your neighbourhood is safe? Are you and your family a target of violence or harassment? Are there people nearby that you can count on to check in with your child and/or who your child or young babysitter can call if there is a problem? If you have any worries about the safety of where you live, it may not be a good choice to leave your child at home without a trusted adult caregiver.

Your child's reaction

Think about how your child has handled stressful, difficult or frightening situations in the past. Ask if there is anything they might be afraid of, and how confident they feel about handling different situations alone.

Other factors to consider in deciding whether to authorize a child to leave independently, for example:

- a. the child's skills and temperament;
- b. the child's cognitive and reasoning skills and physical or mental capacity;
- c. any psychological or other medical disorders of the child;
- d. the prior conduct of the child;
- e. the child's ability to follow instructions, traffic signals and pavement markings;
- f. the child's ability to recite their name, address and phone number in case of emergency;
- g. The safety of the travel route (e.g., the availability of sidewalks and crosswalks; the type of neighborhood; are the streets well-travelled; local street safety measures; whether there is heavy traffic or railway crossings); and
- h. The length of the walk and how long child will be alone; and
- i. Any other factor that is significant based on the parent/guardian's knowledge of the child.

In general:

Ten to Eleven Years Old	Children Twelve & Older
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in this age group may be occasionally left alone at home for up to one to two hours (e.g., after school 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.), provided they have no fear or anxiety staying home alone and the child's level of maturity matches this arrangement. • Children in this age group should not be home alone for any period of time during overnight hours or be expected to take care of younger siblings or friends. • In order to ensure a child's safety, parents should teach them general safety rules which should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how to react in case of a fire, power outage and other emergencies ○ how to use the telephone and how to answer the telephone or door (and know the dangers of each) ○ whom to contact in an emergency ○ where to find emergency and contact numbers (both should be posted by the phone) ○ where emergency supplies, like a flashlight and first aid kit, are kept and how to use them ○ how to use a house key responsibly? ○ how to set limits with friends ○ where to play, with whom and for how long 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that children in this age group are not left alone overnight. Children in this age group are often able to babysit younger children. They should be able to demonstrate that they can follow safety rules. • A babysitter who has a babysitting certificate has demonstrated a commitment to take care of younger children and has learned skills that help keep children safe. • a 12 or 13-year-old babysitter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ should not be left in charge of more than two children; ○ should not be responsible for cooking, supervising swimming of or the bathing of children; ○ must have zero to five minutes access to consultation with a parent or a responsible adult; and it is generally preferred/ recommended that they do not babysit after midnight or for periods longer than four hours per day ○ a sitter's number one priority should be looking after the children NOT entertaining friends, listening to music, etc.

These are only guidelines. Parents are ultimately responsible for their children's safety!

How would the independent departure work at RisingOaks Early Learning?

If you have discussed such an agreement with your child and have decided that they are mature enough and ready for this type of independence, complete the *Request for a 10-12 year old to Leave Independently* form.

- The form will ask you to indicate a time period in which your child may leave the program. For example, between 4:30 and 4:45 pm.
- Indicate the type of schedule that this will apply to – either a consistent schedule (e.g., every Monday, Thursday and Friday) or only on specific dates that you will notify the supervisor of in advance and in writing.

The form will be reviewed by a supervisor who will provide written confirmation and approval of such arrangements and then notify the educator team of the start date.

On the date that your child will leave independently, he or she is required to approach the educator to confirm that it is time for them to leave.

The educator will conduct a brief informal assessment of their physical and mental state to confirm that they are fit to leave the program independently and together they will record the time on the sign out form.

- If the child is upset or hurt, the educator will support your child with that issue prior to allowing them to depart. Should the departure be delayed beyond five minutes past the timeframe specified, the educator will contact the parent to advise them of the situation.

Once the child leaves the program, it is the responsibility of the parent to check in with them to ensure they have arrived at the agreed upon destination.

If you wish to proceed, please complete the *Request for 10-12 Year Old to Leave Independently* form and submit it to the centre Supervisor for review.

Adding a Youth (ages 12 – 15) to your Authorized Pick-Up List

Whether it's an older sibling leaving with a younger child or a youth known to the family, take some time to talk to them to assess that they are ready for this responsibility. Review the guidelines outlined above.

If you have discussed such an agreement with your child(ren) and the identified youth and have decided to proceed, complete the *Request to Add Youth (ages 12 to 15) to Authorized Pick-Up List* and submit it to the centre Supervisor for review. If approved, the supervisor will add the youth to your child's pick-up list.