

How old must a child be to stay home alone in KS?

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Topeka Capital-Journal
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Children under 7 should never be left home alone without adult supervision, says the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

But federal law doesn't set an age requirement mandating how old youngsters must be before they can be left home alone.

Neither does Kansas law, said a graphic DCF posted on its website.

Still, DCF says, there are ways to determine if a child is old enough to take on that responsibility.

DCF: Children 7 to 9 may be left alone for short periods during the day

Most children become developmentally ready to stay home alone around age 12 or 13, the DCF graphic said.

"Each child's maturity and abilities can be different, so use your own judgment when deciding if your child is

ready to be home alone," it said.

Children between ages 7 and 9 may be left alone for short periods of time during the day but should not be responsible for other children in the home, the DCF graphic said.

"Children ages 10 and older may be left alone, depending on factors such as length of time, time of day and their maturity level," it said.

Questions to ask before leaving children home alone

Parents considering leaving their child home alone should look at the child's age in relationship to growth, behavior and judgment, the North Dakota Department of Human Services said in a graphic it posted online.

That graphic shared questions that department suggests parents ask as they consider whether to leave a child home alone.

Those are as follows:

- How does the child feel about the situation?
- With what responsibilities would

the child be left? Would the child be able to handle those?

- What safety risks would be present?
- How long would the child be left alone? The first few times should be quite short. Absences may get longer once it becomes clear the child feels confident about safety.
- Is the child capable of resisting peer pressure if friends encourage him or her to break rules when no adults are around?

Here's how to prepare children to be home alone

DCF suggests that before parents leave their children home alone for the first time, they prepare them for that experience by doing the following:

- Providing them access to a fully charged cell phone and a list of any phone numbers they may need to call in the event of questions or emergencies, with one of those preferably being the number of a trusted adult who lives nearby.

- Teaching them when and how to call 911.
 - Teaching them what to do in the event of fire.
 - Teaching them what to do in the event of severe weather.
 - Reminding them to keep the doors locked, not answer any knocks at the door and not tell anyone online or over the phone that no adults are present.
 - Show them where the first aid kit is located and demonstrate for them how they can use it to administer basic first aid.
 - Remind them to avoid cooking or — if an older child capable of cooking is present — to take proper care when doing so.
 - Make it clear that children are not allowed in or near swimming pools without adult supervision.
 - Make sure any weapons, medications or potential poisons are safely stored away.
 - Provide in writing any information the child might need.
- Contact Tim Hrenchir at threnchir@gannett.com or 785-213-5934.

Fishing

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Wildlife and Parks staff and members of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission. But the plan for a shortened trout season caught flak from lawmakers this month, as did other proposed fishing regulation changes.

Now, commissioners and the agency will have to decide whether to proceed despite criticism from legislators.

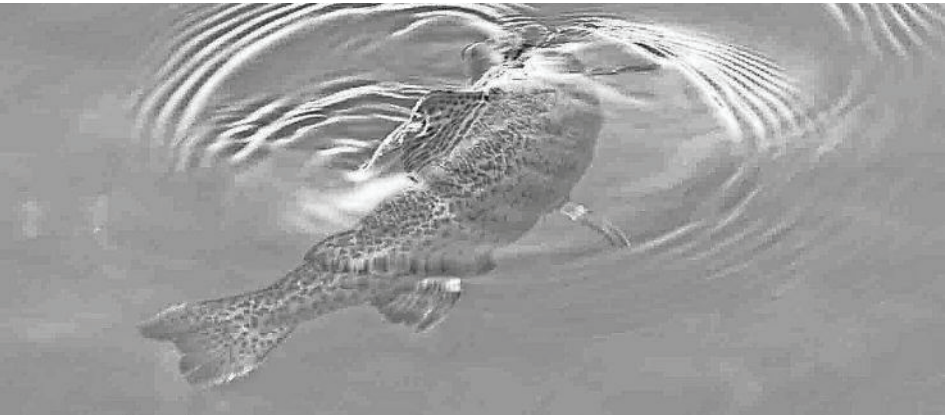
KDWP close to finalizing regulation shortening trout season

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is close to finalizing changes to a fishing regulation, K.A.R. 115-25-14, that would adjust the trout season and creel limits.

The regulation was presented to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules and Regulations on June 10. There, KDWP chief counsel Kurtis Wiard summarized the most significant changes in the regulation.

"It shortens the trout season from Nov. 1 through April 15, to Dec. 1 to March 31," Wiard said. "It also, in large part, liberalizes the blue catfish restrictions in this state allowing anglers to harvest more and more blue cats."

The same regulations are scheduled for a public hearing June 26 during the



A rainbow trout can be seen swimming shortly after being released into Lake Shawnee. THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting in Russell.

The commission's agenda for the June 26 meeting also includes an update on the promulgation of a separate trout fee regulation. A commission vote on that is expected at an Aug. 14 meeting. It has not yet been presented to the legislative committee.

Why does Kansas want to shorten trout fishing season?

While trout fishing is popular in Kansas, the species is not native to the state, so the government stocks public waters with fish for the winter trout season. The Kansas trout program dates to 1994, according to KDWP.

But costs from vendors have been

rising, and seasonal weather near the beginning and end of the season can affect fish health, risking mass dieoffs of the cold-water fish like in March 2022, when more than 200 dead rainbow trout washed up on the shore of Lake Shawnee.

Wiard told lawmakers the primary reason for shortening the trout season is "a massive increase in costs."

"Unlike our neighboring states like Colorado, which have obviously reproducing populations, and Missouri, where they have several trout hatcheries, we have to buy every trout that comes into the state of Kansas," Wiard said. "And from what I understand talking to our fisheries people, our suppliers, the cost of trout is skyrocketing, and that's primarily because they're receiv-

ing skyrocketing costs of feed to feed the trout. So each trout costs more and more.

"We did creel surveys with our trout anglers, and they indicated they were OK with this change. We're shortening the season and not stocking as many trout to combat costs."

Documents submitted by KDWP indicate other states and federal entities are taking similar approaches to address rising costs.

What lawmakers said about shortening trout season

Kansas has shortened the trout season for at least the past two winters, and KDWP documents said the latest regulatory changes had been publicly discussed in at least five workshop sessions of the Wildlife and Parks Commission, but some lawmakers appeared to be hearing about it for the first time.

Rep. Bill Sutton, R-Gardner, questioned why the state stocks fish in the first place.

"I'd love to see the numbers as far as the expense of the purchase versus the amount of trout fishing that we attract revenue from," Sutton said. "But ... I thought wildlife was, you know, wildlife. The stuff that existed was a natural resource of the state, not something that we brought in to prop up licensing. So are there other nonindigenous species

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Fraud

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reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in government, goals which I share," Gov. Laura Kelly said in a statement to The Capital-Journal. "Cancelling this funding is counterintuitive, hypocritical, and hurts the Kansas Department of Labor's ability to safeguard Kansans' taxpayer dollars. If the Trump Administration truly values reducing fraud and abuse, it should demonstrate that to Kansans by reinstating this funding."

What was the fraud prevention grant funding for?

A federal government website's description of the grant said, "The purpose of these grant funds is to help states strengthen UI program integrity, including ID verification, fraud prevention and detection, and overpayment recovery efforts in all UC programs."

Grant funding was to be used on "procurement and or implementation of ID verification, fraud prevention, and overpayment recovery tools, solutions, and services, which includes any costs related to the states integration with the departments national ID verification offering payment of subscription costs to operate new and or maintain existing services solutions and hiring of staff to conduct data analysis, investigations, collections, recovery, or other integrity-related duties."

The federal government website indicates the grant for about \$1.7 million was awarded in September 2023, but the state only got about \$677,000 of that before

roughly \$1.1 million was taken away in June 2025.

Shultz said the grant was a "response to the unprecedented disruptions and vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic." The state agency said the funding helped "counter criminal attacks and operational breakdowns that strained unemployment systems and diverted insurance payments from Kansans."

"Terminating this partnership now leaves states more vulnerable to the very threats we were called to confront," Shultz said.

Why did USDOL cut fraud prevention grant to Kansas?

Kansas was informed by a notice of termination on May 22 written by USDOL grant officer Janice Sheelor and sent to Shultz.

Sheelor said the grant was terminated because "the Department has determined that the award does not effectuate agency priorities."

She indicated the decision was made after a review of COVID-19 relief funding under the American Rescue Plan Act.

KDOL sends letter to US labor secretary and Congress

Shultz, the state labor secretary, sent a letter to U.S. labor secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer on June 26. Copies of the letter were also sent to the state's six members of Congress

In her letter, Shultz took issue with the termination notice indicating fraud prevention is no longer a priority.

She said USDOL had previously "clearly articulated its commitment to investments in UI system modernization and fraud prevention." She said "to now characterize this work as inconsistent with Departmental objectives is both confusing and contradictory."

"The rationale of canceling a grant specifically intended to detect and prevent fraud is, frankly, counterproductive," Shultz wrote. "The funding supported critical infrastructure: identity verification tools, fraud analytics, and system safeguards that directly addressed the criminal attacks and operational failures that overwhelmed state systems during the pandemic. Revoking this support now leaves states more vulnerable to the very threats we were all called to confront."

Shultz said the USDOL inspector general and the Government Accountability Office "have repeatedly underscored the urgent need for states to improve fraud prevention and recovery efforts." She said such findings demonstrate a need for federal investment.

"If the Department's priorities have shifted so substantially, we respectfully request clarity on what those priorities are," Shultz wrote. "Without such transparency, states are left without direction at a time when certainty, collaboration, and continued investment are most critical.

"I strongly urge the Department to reconsider this decision and reaffirm its commitment to the collaborative modernization of UI systems. If the goal is truly to ensure program integrity and deliver better service to the American people, then this grant should be viewed as essential — not expendable."

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