



IT'S AFTER 10 P.M. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE?

The City of Santa Clarita has long addressed the complaints of residents regarding juvenile curfew violations through the enforcement of an ordinance that was enacted over 10 years ago. While some parents believe it is the right of a parent to allow their minor child to remain out late at night, a vast majority of problems and criminal activity involving juveniles is attributed to the lack of supervision and responsibility exercised by these minors.

Far too often, some of our local youth are becoming involved in criminal activity. This curfew ordinance is necessary in order to protect them from becoming victims of crime or from becoming involved in crimes late at night.

In 2009, Santa Clarita Sheriff's deputies arrested 472 juveniles for violating the local curfew ordinance, with most of those arrests occurring in the summer months. Many of these arrests resulted from complaints by local residents or businesses where unsupervised minors were caught loitering around public areas such as malls, parks or businesses.

The curfew, which applies to those 17 years old and younger, makes it unlawful for any minor to remain upon any public street, public building, place of amusement or eating place, vacant lot, or unsupervised place between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Certain provisions of this ordinance require parents to know the whereabouts of their minor children during these late hours. The minor must be accompanied by his or her parent or legal guardian unless they are handling a specific errand at the direction of the parent or legal guardian, without any detour or stop.

An exception to this requirement is if the minor is engaged in an employment activity, or going to or returning home from an employment activity, without any detour or stop. Other conditions, other than emergency type situations, would allow a minor to remain away from home after hours if they are attending an official school, religious, or other recreational activity supervised by adults and sponsored by the City of Santa Clarita, a civic organization, or another similar entity that takes responsibility for the minor.

While a curfew is in no way a panacea, it's an important way to help our deputies keep the streets safe. Most cities in Los Angeles County have adopted similar ordinance which require parental or adult supervision of minors. We want to encourage parents to take responsibility for their children's whereabouts.

Some of the biggest misunderstandings of this law involve information regarding who may act as a "legal guardian." The juvenile courts have determined that a legal guardian is a parent or one appointed by the court, not an eighteen year old friend or sibling. The courts have also determined that a detour would represent any stop, including a drive-thru, a friend's house, or to pick someone up.

A good example of a civic organization or another similar entity would be a scouting or school event. Hosting an after-prom party at your house does not qualify. The court is on record saying a ratio of about 10:1 minors to parents is needed for proper supervision at a house. And still, each minor must be home by 10 p.m. or picked up by their parent.

The simple facts of this ordinance mean that in most cases, minors need to be home by 10 p.m., unless coming directly from work. Otherwise, they must be accompanied by their parent. (i.e. if they are going to leave the party at 10 p.m. they need to be picked up by their parent).

For more information regarding this ordinance, please see the Municipal Code Section 11.56.020 at www.santa-clarita.com.

The City of Santa Clarita and the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Department are dedicated to our continuing efforts to keep our community and our youth safe. To report violations of curfew, please call the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station (661) 255-1121.