JCFS CHICAGO

SMART KIDS

COLD OUTSIDE, CONNECTED INSIDE

Simple Tips for a Safe Winter Break

Snowflakes & Supervision

- **Review "Ask First":** Remind kids that even on vacation, they still need to check in with the adult in charge and ask permission before changing plans or activities, so you know where they are and who they're with.
- **Identify trusted adults:** If you're not the supervising adult, review the other adults you trust who can keep an eye on your children.
- **Build in check-ins:** Kids may be running in and out, playing with cousins, or switching activities, so quick check-ins help keep things safe and predictable. Long stretches of unsupervised time can lead to unsafe behavior.

Laughter & Limits

- **Set expectations for vacation days:** Before vacation starts, review how the week might look, whether it's late nights, outings, travel days, or quiet days at home. Clear guidelines and rules can create consistency, which helps children feel safe even during an unpredictable time.
- **Model healthy boundaries**: After a week of togetherness (think: siblings, cousins, crowded plans) kids may need space. Help them communicate that respectfully and notice your own need for boundaries too.
- **Support independence with structure:** Kids often get extra freedom during winter break; pairing independence with limits helps them succeed.

Cocoa & Conversations

- **Use the little moments:** Winter break is full of small, unplanned opportunities to bond—during car rides, activities, mealtimes, or even bedtime routines.
- **Create space:** The excitement (or overstimulation) of vacation can bring up big feelings. Offer opportunities for your children to talk about their day, including anything that gives them that instinctive or "uh-oh feeling."
- **Stay steady:** Breaks can be stressful, and children often take cues from the adults around them. A calm, relaxed tone helps them feel safe to come to you with questions or concerns.

For more resources like this one, check out JCFS.org.

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