'Free Range' Parents Found Responsible for Child Neglect After Allowing Kids to Walk Home Alone

By CANDACE SMITH and LAUREN EFFRON • Mar 3, 2015, 5:05 PM ET

A Maryland couple who was being investigated for allowing their two children to walk home alone from a neighborhood park have been "found responsible for unsubstantiated child neglect" by the state's Child Protective Services.

Maryland Child Protective Services began investigating Danielle and Alexander Meitiv of Silver Spring, Maryland, for practicing so-called "free-range parenting," a philosophy that encourages children to have some independence.

In the Meitivs' case, this means they allow their two children, Rafi and Dvora, ages 10 and 6, to play outside and walk home by themselves.

The couple told "Nightline" in an email today that they found out the results of the CPS investigation last week.

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Free Range Parents Believe in Independence

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and want to give them the freedom to explore on their own.

“I’m just parenting the way I was, that’s all I ever really want to do, is parent,” Danielle told “Nightline.”

But that all changed after the March 9th incident when they were walking home from a 

Maryland Child Protective Services then accused the Meltdvs of neglect, saying they had 

committed to a safety plan, the kids would have to go into foster homes. In this case, 

leaving anyone under age 18 unsupervised constitutes neglect.

Suddenly this middle-class suburban family found themselves smack in the 

national parenting debate.

When asked for comment, Maryland Child Protective Services referred the 

Maryland State Department of Human Resources.

A Maryland State Department of Human Resources spokeswoman said that 

laws prohibits them from commenting on any specific case, and would only 

serve as "a point of reference that will be used in any future decision.

No criminal charges have been filed.

The Meltdvs stand by their belief that they are the best ones to judge if their children 

and if their neighborhood is safe enough, for them to be on their own, not through government.

"Frankly I think that raising independent children and responsible children and giving them the freedom that I enjoyed is a risk worth taking," Danielle Meltdv told "Nightline" in a previous interview. "In the end it's our decision as parents."

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Free Range Parents Believe in Letting Kids Roam Alone

Rafi and Dvora Meltdv were walking home from the park recently in Silver Spring, Maryland, when they were suddenly confronted by strangers.