

Child Abuse
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Mother charged in child-neglect case

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SCOTTS VALLEY — A 28-year-old woman whose children were taken from her Sunday after police found them home alone says she will fight back.

Cherie Jean Atkinson was arraigned on felony charges of child neglect Wednesday morning. She is free on her own recognizance, but her children, ages 11, 9 and 3, are now with local foster parents.

Scotts Valley police say they were acting on information from a "confidential informant" when they visited the woman's Blake Lane apartment Sunday night.

They found the two older children in the home by themselves. A 3-year-old had been left with friends, police said.

The apartment was in a state of disarray, according to the police reports, with no food for

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the children, telephone, or television.

Atkinson was arrested Monday morning after spending the night with a boyfriend in Capitola.

In an interview Wednesday, Atkinson's

apartment had been cleaned up and appeared to be in good condition. She denied neglecting her children.

Food also was available Wednesday.

The home had become messy, she said, because she took in two teen-age girls, ages 16 and 18, so they could all share rent.

Atkinson said her children had been left with the 18-year-old, but the woman left the children because of a "miscommunication." The 16-year-old, staying next door at the time, was looking after them, she said.

Neighbors reported no serious problems with Atkinson, an AFDC recipient who receives no support from the fathers of the children.

"So far as I know she's a good mother who loves her children," one woman said.

Atkinson said she has been granted visitation of her children and wants to get them back. Further court proceedings were set for Aug. 16.