

State of Vermont
Department for Children and Families
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Agency of Human Services

December 11, 2006

Dear Safe Haven,

Re: Baby Safe Haven Law

On May 2, 2006, Governor Jim Douglas signed the Baby Safe Haven Bill into Law, making it legal for parents to give up their babies — anonymously — at designated Safe Havens throughout the State.

Under this new law, any person can bring a baby, up to 30 days old, to a Safe Haven in Vermont. This includes any police or fire station, health care facility, place of worship, adoption agency licensed in Vermont, or place a 911 emergency responder agrees to meet a person to receive a baby. To be covered by the law, the person must hand the baby to a volunteer or employee of a Safe Haven.

The Department for Children and Families was mandated to develop a campaign to make the public aware of this new law. The Governor launched the public outreach campaign at a press conference held at the State House on October 12, 2006.

Enclosed are copies of a brochure and poster that you can use to 1) educate your employees and volunteers about the Baby Safe Haven law and 2) help us make the people you serve aware of this important new law. We've also enclosed a copy of *Guidelines for Safe Havens*. These general guidelines will not apply to all Safe Havens or all situations; however, they can help you develop your own protocol, either on your own or in partnership with other Safe Havens in your community.

If you would like additional copies of the enclosed outreach materials, please contact Cindy Miller at (802) 241-2251 or cmiller@srs.state.vt.us.

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Guidelines For Safe Havens In Vermont

Vermont's Baby Safe Haven Law offers parents safe places they can relinquish their babies—anonymous-ly and legally. They can do so without fear of being arrested or criminally charged, as long as the babies have not been abused or neglected.

To be covered by the law, a person (it does not have to be a parent) must *hand* the baby, up to 30 days old, to an employee or volunteer of a Safe Haven. THE BABY CANNOT BE LEFT ALONE.

A Safe Haven is any fire or police station; health care facility; place of worship; adoption agency licensed in Vermont; or place an emergency responder, contacted through 911, agrees to meet the person to receive a baby.

If you are an employee or volunteer working in a designated Safe Haven, it's important to know that:

- 1) You may receive a baby at any time; and
- 2) You are immune from civil or criminal liability for actions taken to fulfill your duties under this law.

If you are presented with a Safe Haven baby, the following guidelines will help you carry out your responsibilities under this law.

Protocol

- Take physical custody of the baby. Briefly examine the baby to make sure he/she is not in immediate danger. If the baby appears to be in immediate danger, call 911.
- Offer the person the Safe Haven brochure published by the Agency of Human Services.
- Advise the person that while she/he is not required to reveal any identifying information, she/he may provide information about the child's medical history using the voluntary medical form that is attached to the Safe Haven brochure. Encourage the person to complete the form and leave it with you. If the form is left with you, please complete the information at the bottom of the form with the date you received the baby and your location.
- Document any additional information about the child, the birthparents, and/or the situation that is offered voluntarily, including any names the person is willing to provide.
- Call 911. Advise the dispatcher that you have physical custody of a baby abandoned under the Baby Safe Haven law. Ask the dispatcher to send an ambulance to transport the baby to the nearest hospital and a police officer to take legal custody of the baby. Provide any forms and information collected to the officer who takes custody of the infant. Keep a copy for your records.
- Immediately call your local DCF, Family Services District Office to report what has happened. 442-8138
- If the baby is left after normal business hours, on a weekend, or on a state holiday, call Family Services' Emergency Services Program at 1-800-649-5285 to make a report.

Note: If the person comes back to request the return of the baby and the baby is still there, *do not* give the baby back. Instead, instruct the person to contact the local Family Services District Office of DCF.