



# Safe Haven

It's Legal. It's Safe. It's Anonymous.

To get addresses and directions for any hospital, police station or sheriff's office in Arkansas

please call **1-888-510-BABY**  
2 2 2 9

You also can visit our website at  
[www.arkansasafehaven.org](http://www.arkansasafehaven.org)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SAFE HAVEN PROGRAM

### What is Safe Haven?

Safe Haven is a law designed to protect babies. In Arkansas, under this law a parent may give up an infant anonymously. As long as the baby has not been abused or neglected, the parent may relinquish the child without fear of arrest or prosecution.

### Why did Arkansas do this?

The purpose of Safe Haven is to protect babies from being hurt or killed from unsafe abandonment. Abandoning a baby puts the infant in extreme danger that can result in the baby's death. It is also illegal, with severe consequences. But with Safe Haven, a baby can be safely given up at a hospital emergency room or law enforcement agency.

### How does it work?

A parent who does not want an infant or who is unable to care for an infant can give up custody of a baby 30 days old or younger legally and anonymously. All that is required is that the baby be brought to a hospital emergency room, police station, or sheriff's office in Arkansas. As long as the child shows no signs of intentional abuse, no name or other information is required.

### Can only a parent bring in the baby?

Yes. In Arkansas, only a parent can bring the baby to the appropriate drop off facility.

### Does he or she have to call before bringing in the baby?

No. They can walk in anytime.

### Does a parent have to give any information to the people taking the baby?

No. Nothing is required. However, hospital personnel or law enforcement officers should record any information that a parent is willing to share, such as the child's health, race, date of birth, place of birth, name or medical history of the parents. This could be very useful in caring for the child. These questions can be answered anonymously on a medical questionnaire that is available in this toolkit. Please keep printouts of the questionnaire available and give one to the parent relinquishing the child.

### What happens if the parent voluntarily gives her identifying information to medical facility or law enforcement personnel when dropping off the baby?

If a parent voluntarily provides personal identifying information his/her anonymity will be protected unless the child was abused or neglected before delivery to the medical provider or law enforcement agency.

### What happens to a parent when she drops off the baby?

If a mother brings in the baby, she should be offered medical treatment and social services. She can, of course, refuse if she wishes. Once she has safely turned over the baby, she is free to go. Give her a card with information about how to share information about the baby, what to do if she changes her mind or if she decides later she wants to make contact with her baby. Tell her she can complete the anonymous medical questionnaire and drop it in any mailbox.



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(continued)

### **What happens to the baby once the baby is dropped off?**

The child should be given a medical exam and treatment, if needed. Then the Arkansas Department of Human Services' Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will immediately take custody and place the child in a foster or pre-adoptive home. DCFS will then initiate the process of terminating parental rights, freeing the baby for adoption.

### **Why would a parent give up a baby?**

Babies have been given up for many reasons, including: mother kept the pregnancy a secret, mother fears she does not have enough money or support to care for her baby, the baby was the result of rape or incest, mother is afraid of being abused if pregnancy/baby is discovered, mother is afraid of the humiliation of having a baby out of wedlock, and more. A parent who has experienced any of these circumstances may be under severe emotional distress. Because she is afraid and feels she has nowhere to turn for help, she could unsafely abandoned her newborn.

### **Can someone take another person's baby and turn the baby in as an abandoned baby?**

When a baby is given up, the Division of Children and Family Services shall use the Missing Persons Information Clearinghouse and any other national and state resources to determine whether the child is a missing child.

### **What happens if the mother, or a relative, wishes to regain custody of a baby?**

If the mother, or a relative, wishes to regain custody of the baby they should immediately contact the local Division of Children and Family Services office in the county where the baby was dropped off.