

## Guidelines for Safe Havens in Vermont

Vermont's baby safe haven law offers parents safe places where they can relinquish their babies, up to 30 days old, without fear of being arrested or criminally charged as long as their babies have not been abused or neglected.

Safe havens include fire stations, police stations, health care facilities, places of worship, adoption agencies licensed in Vermont, and anywhere an emergency responder, contacted through 911, agrees to meet someone to receive a baby.

**Note:** Not all safe havens are staffed 24/7.

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### Important To Know

- A safe haven may receive a baby at any time when staff is on duty.
  - To be covered by the law, the person must hand the baby to an employee or volunteer of a safe haven. **A baby cannot be left alone.**
  - Staff and volunteers of safe havens are immune from civil or criminal liability for actions taken to fulfill their duties under this law.
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### Protocol For Safe Havens

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

1. Take physical custody of the baby.
2. Dial 911.
3. Advise the dispatcher that you have physical custody of a baby surrendered under the baby safe haven law.
4. 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.
5. Let the dispatcher know if the baby appears to be in need of immediate medical attention or appears to be in immediate danger.
6. Immediately call the Department for Children and Families (DCF) at 1-800-649-5285 to make a report. If the safe haven location is aware of the parents' identity(ies), they should not disclose that information to DCF when they report the infant has been identified as a safe haven placement. If DCF has concerns about abuse or neglect, they will contact the baby safe haven for more information.

7. Baby safe haven providers should ensure individuals are provided with the opportunity to complete the voluntary medical/cultural history form located on the brochure. All safe haven locations will be provided baby safe haven brochures to have available to the public. Brochures will also be available at DCF and Public Health Offices and is available online at: [babysafehaven.vermont.gov](http://babysafehaven.vermont.gov).
  8. If the person comes back to request the return of the baby and the baby is still at the baby safe haven location, do not give the baby back. Instead, instruct the person to call 1-800-649-5285.
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## **Tips for Baby Safe Haven Location Conversations with Delivering Persons:**

- When a person brings a baby to a safe haven location, the safe haven provider may request information from the person which will be helpful for the care of the child. If the person delivering the baby to the safe haven appears to be emotionally distressed by or resistant to the safe haven provider's requests for information, the safe haven provider:
  - will thank the person for bringing the infant to a safe place and reassure them that the baby will be safe and that efforts will be made to protect their privacy.
  - will not further question the person.
  - will not attempt to detain or obtain identifying information about the person relinquishing the baby.
- If the delivering person would like to share medical and/or cultural information to be shared with the child, the safe haven provider should provide them with and can assist them with completing the Medical/Cultural Information section of the baby safe haven brochure
- Offer them a copy of the baby safe haven brochure for more information.
- Although the person delivering the baby to your care may have provided you with personally identifiable information, do not share the identifiable information or seek additional information. The person's identity and privacy should be protected and respected.
- Barring any safety concerns, the safe haven provider should make efforts to ensure any items left with the child are sent along when the child leaves the safe haven location.
- If the delivering person is in distress, the baby safe haven provider may offer to call for medical assistance and/or mental health support if needed.