

“Safe Haven” Suggested Guidelines Missouri Law Enforcement



Statute – Chapter 210 “Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002” (revised 2014)

Child protection and reformation Section 210.950

(<http://www.moga.mo.gov/mostatutes/stathtml/21000009501.html>)

Purpose:

To protect newborn children from injury and death caused by abandonment by a parent and to **provide safe and secure alternatives** to such abandonment.

The Law:

A parent shall not be prosecuted for voluntary relinquishment of a child if:

- The person purporting to be the parent voluntarily delivers the child to the physical custody of any paid or volunteer Fire Fighter, Emergency Medical Technician, Hospital staff, Law Enforcement Officer, Maternity Home or Pregnancy Resource Center staff.
- The child is no more than 45 days old. (Physician to make the final determination)
- No physical signs of abuse or neglect are suspected.

The Fire Fighter, Emergency Medical Technician, Hospital Staff, Maternity Home staff, Pregnancy Resource Center staff or Law Enforcement Officer shall remain immune from civil, criminal and administrative liability for accepting physical custody of a child if such persons accept custody in good faith.

Safe Haven expenses are eligible for coverage under Missouri Medicaid, subject to federal rules.

Parental rights are terminated 30 days after public notice is issued.

The Law does not require that personal information be obtained from the relinquishing parent.

“Safe Haven” Process:

- Recognize that a “Safe Haven” event is occurring and **make every effort to maintain anonymity** of the surrender process.
- Unless there is evidence of abuse or neglect, neither a child protective investigation nor a criminal investigation may be initiated solely because a newborn infant is relinquished under the provision of the Safe Place for Newborns Act.
- Provide emergency medical care to the newborn infant to the extent, he or she is trained to provide those services. Surrender period is 45 days or less. **Physician to make the final determination.**
- Offer to get the mother emergency medical care. Provide her with other optional resources, i.e. the “Getting Help” letter and medical history questionnaire. She is not required to answer any questions or complete the questionnaire.
- Depending on the location and circumstances, contact Fire/Rescue/EMS or immediately transport the baby directly to the nearest appropriate hospital.
- If a parent(s) return to reclaim the newborn, either prior to or after transporting the newborn to the hospital, instruct them to contact officials at the receiving hospital facility.
- Report the incident to next in command and complete your agency report.
- Notify your agency Public Information Officer to handle Media Inquiries.

Please go to http://mchc.net/programs/safe_havens.aspx when a baby is relinquished under the Safe Haven program. Statistics are maintained such as:

- Number of newborns saved under “Safe Haven” Law.
- Those abandoned in dangerous places.
- Geographic and Demographic information regarding the newborn child.