

Idaho Safe Haven Act

Questions and Answers

What is the Idaho Safe Haven Act?

The Idaho Safe Haven Act is intended to provide a safe alternative for parents who might otherwise abandon their baby. If a parent turns the baby over to a safe haven, they can remain anonymous and will not be prosecuted for child neglect or abandonment. The law identifies certain medical professionals and hospitals as "safe havens". A safe haven is authorized by law to accept a baby less than 30 days of age, directly from a parent, without identifying the parent. The parent is not required to provide any information to the safe haven, but may volunteer medical or other information. This law became effective July 1, 2001.

Who can be a safe havens?

The law specifically identifies the following Safe Havens:

- Hospitals licensed in the State of Idaho;
- Licensed physicians and staff working at the physician's offices or clinics;
- Advanced practice professional nurses, including certified nurse midwives, nurse practitioners, and registered nurse anesthetists;
- Licensed physician assistants;
- Emergency medical personnel when responding to a 911 call requesting safe haven.

What does a safe haven do?

The safe haven will: 1) accept the baby from the parent; 2) make certain the baby receives necessary medical attention; 3) immediately contact a peace officer. The peace officer will establish emergency protective custody of the baby. The peace officer will contact the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, which will provide an emergency home. The safe haven will not ask the parent's name, but may ask the parent if they wish to provide medical or other information about the baby.

What happens to babies left with a safe haven?

The baby will immediately be provided necessary medical care. He/she will then be placed with a foster family and the adoption process will begin. The Idaho Safe Haven Act provides guidelines for terminating parental rights and making the baby available for adoption. The process allows the baby to be adopted by a family within a short time. The process does make certain the baby is not a missing or kidnapped child, and it does allow for the parents to change their minds prior to the termination of parental rights.

How does one get more information?

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and associations of medical professionals have prepared guidelines and additional information about the Idaho Safe Haven Act. This information can be obtained by calling the Idaho CareLine (1-800-926-2588).