

Every baby deserves a chance for a healthy life. If someone you know is considering abandoning a baby, let her know there are other options. For three days (72 hours) after birth, a baby can be surrendered to staff at any hospital or fire station in Los Angeles County.

Our Commitment to Babies

Los Angeles County is committed to making California's **Safely Surrendered Baby Law** well-known throughout our County. Since the Law went into effect on January 1, 2001, we have worked hard to ensure that no baby is ever abandoned again in Los Angeles County. In 2002, a task force was created, under the guidance of the Children's Planning Council, to study the issue of newborn abandonment and develop a strategic plan to help us prevent this needless tragedy. All County departments and numerous public and private agencies involved in providing services to children contributed and continue to play an active role in enhancing the Law's effectiveness and heightening public awareness. Since the task force was formed and put its recommendations into place, the number of Safely Surrendered babies has increased. In Los Angeles County, the **Safely Surrendered Baby Law** is doing exactly what it was designed to do – save the lives of our most innocent residents.



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Safely Surrendered Baby Law



*Babies can be safely surrendered
to staff at any hospital or fire station
in Los Angeles County*

No shame. No blame. No names.

In Los Angeles County:
1-877-BABY SAFE
1-877-222-9723
www.babysafela.org



Safely Surrendered Baby Law

What is the Safely Surrendered Baby Law?

California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law allows parents or other persons, with *lawful custody*, which means anyone to whom the parent has given permission to confidentially surrender a baby. As long as the baby is three days (72 hours) of age or younger and has not been abused or neglected, the baby may be surrendered without fear of arrest or prosecution.

How does it work?

A distressed parent who is unable or unwilling to care for a baby can legally, confidentially, and safely surrender a baby within three days (72 hours) of birth. The baby must be handed to an employee at a hospital or fire station in Los Angeles County. As long as the baby shows no sign of abuse or neglect, no name or other information is required. In case the parent changes his or her mind at a later date and wants the baby back, staff will use bracelets to help connect them to each other. One bracelet will be placed on the baby, and a matching bracelet will be given to the parent or other surrendering adult.

What if a parent wants the baby back?

Parents who change their minds can begin the process of reclaiming their baby within 14 days. These parents should call the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services at **1-800-540-4000**.

Can only a parent bring in the baby?

No. While in most cases a parent will bring in the baby, the Law allows other people to bring in the baby *if they have lawful custody*.

Does the parent or surrendering adult have to call before bringing in the baby?

No. A parent or surrendering adult can bring in a baby anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as long as the parent or surrendering adult surrenders the baby to someone who works at the hospital or fire station.

Does the parent or surrendering adult have to tell anything to the people taking the baby?

No. However, hospital or fire station personnel will ask the surrendering party to fill out a questionnaire designed to gather important medical history information, which is very useful in caring for the baby. The questionnaire includes a stamped return envelope and can be sent in at a later time.

What happens to the baby?

The baby will be examined and given medical treatment. Upon release from the hospital, social workers immediately place the baby in a safe and loving home and begin the adoption process.

What happens to the parent or surrendering adult?

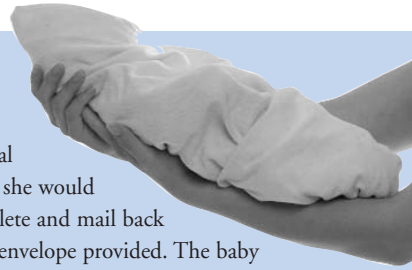
Once the parent or surrendering adult surrenders the baby to hospital or fire station personnel, they may leave at any time.

Why is California doing this?

The purpose of the **Safely Surrendered Baby Law** is to protect babies from being abandoned, hurt or killed by their parents. You may have heard tragic stories of babies left in dumpsters or public bathrooms. Their parents may have been under severe emotional distress. The mothers may have hidden their pregnancies, fearful of what would happen if their families found out. Because they were afraid and had no one or nowhere to turn for help, they abandoned their babies. Abandoning a baby is illegal and places the baby in extreme danger. Too often, it results in the baby's death. The **Safely Surrendered Baby Law** prevents this tragedy from ever happening again in California.

A baby's story

Early in the morning on April 9, 2005, a healthy baby boy was safely surrendered to nurses at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. The woman who brought the baby to the hospital identified herself as the baby's aunt and stated the baby's mother had asked her to bring the baby to the hospital on her behalf. The aunt was given a bracelet with a number matching the anklet placed on the baby; this would provide some identification in the event the mother changed her mind about surrendering the baby and wished to reclaim the baby in the 14-day period allowed by the Law. The aunt was also



provided with a medical questionnaire and said she would have the mother complete and mail back in the stamped return envelope provided. The baby was examined by medical staff and pronounced healthy and full-term. He was placed with a loving family that had been approved to adopt him by the Department of Children and Family Services.

Every baby deserves a chance for a healthy life.