

Safe Place for Newborns law keeps infants safe

The Safe Place for Newborns law provides an anonymous alternative for mothers, or someone with a mother's permission, to safely relinquish their newborns. Enacted in 2000 and amended in 2012, the Give Life a Chance; Safe Place for Newborns law was established to provide a mechanism for a mother to voluntarily and anonymously leave her newborn with a "safe place" employee, without fear of prosecution for abandonment.

Information on the law and other information, including brochures, information cards and posters, are available at <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-protection/programsservices/safe-place-for-newborns/>.

Minnesota law

A person may anonymously leave a newborn with an employee of a safe place, provided the newborn:

- Is 7 days old or younger
- Appears to be unharmed
- Is left by the mother or a person who has the mother's permission.

The law defines a safe place as:

- A hospital licensed under Minnesota Statutes, sections 144.50 to 144.56
- A health care clinic that provides urgent care medical services
- An ambulance service dispatched in response to a 911 telephone call from a mother, or a person with the mother's permission, to relinquish a newborn.

Within these conditions, safe place staff will not ask about or share any identifying information about the mother or the person leaving the newborn, nor will safe place staff call the police. Safe place staff may ask about the medical history of the mother, newborn and the newborn's birth relatives.

Immediate care

Upon receiving a newborn, staff will contact the local social services agency to:

- Make arrangements for temporary care
- Secure services to ensure the health and safety of the newborn
- Begin permanency planning, which may include adoption proceedings.

If, prior to the finalization of an adoption, a person presents as the parent of a newborn left under the Safe Place for Newborns law and wants the child returned to their care, the local social services agency will conduct a child maltreatment assessment according to the requirements of Minnesota law. The local social services agency may not determine that maltreatment has occurred based solely on the decision to utilize the Safe Place law.

Situations not covered by the law

- The Safe Place for Newborns law does not apply if mothers give birth in a hospital, as a hospital delivery creates a vital record and anonymity is no longer possible. If a newborn is of American Indian descent, provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act will apply.



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to dhs.info@state.mn.us, call 651-431-4671, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (2-18)