

*Certainly we would prefer that women seek help while they are pregnant, not after giving birth, to receive proper medical care and counseling. But at the same time, we want to assure parents who choose not to keep their baby that they will not go to jail if they deliver their babies to safe hands in a hospital emergency room.*

**The California Safely Surrendered Baby Law:**

Allows a distressed birth parent(s) to legally, confidentially, and safely surrender their baby

Provides a safe place for babies

Protects the parent(s) from arrest or prosecution for abandonment as long as the baby has not been abused or neglected

Does not require that names be given when the baby is surrendered

Permits parents to bring a baby within 3 days of birth to any hospital emergency room in California

**In California, no one ever has to abandon a child again.**



**State of California**  
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor  
**Health and Human Services Agency**  
S. Kimberly Belshé, Secretary  
**Department of Social Services**  
Rita Saenz, Director

PUB 400 (12/03)

**no shame.  
no blame.  
no names.**

**now there's a way  
to safely surrender  
your baby**



### **What is the Safely Surrendered Baby Law?**

It's a new law. Under this law, a person may surrender their baby confidentially. As long as the baby has not been abused or neglected, the person may do so without fear of arrest or prosecution.

### **How does it work?**

A distressed parent who is unable or unwilling to care for an infant can legally, confidentially and safely surrender their baby within 3 days of birth. All that is required is that the baby be brought to a hospital emergency room in California. If there are additional places, they will be listed on the back of this brochure. As long as the child shows no signs of abuse or neglect, no name or other information is required. A bracelet will be placed on the baby for identification. A matching bracelet will be given to the parent. The bracelet will help connect the parent to the baby if the parent wants the baby back.

### **Can only a parent bring in the baby?**

In most cases, a parent will bring in the baby. The law allows another person to bring in the baby if they have legal custody.

### **Does the parent have to call before bringing in the baby?**

No. A parent can bring in a baby anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Does a parent have to tell anything to the people taking the baby?**

No. Nothing is required. However, hospital personnel will give the parent a medical information questionnaire that is designed to gather family medical history. This could be very useful in caring for the child but it is up to the parent to complete it.

### **What happens to the baby?**

The baby will be examined and given medical treatment, if needed. Then the baby will be placed in a foster or pre-adoptive home.

### **What happens to the parent?**

Once the parent(s) has safely turned over the baby, they are free to go.

### **What if a parent wants the baby back?**

The parent(s) may take the bracelet back to the hospital. Hospital personnel will provide information about the baby.

### **Why is California doing this?**

The purpose of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law is to protect babies from being hurt or killed because they were abandoned.

You may have heard tragic stories of babies left in dumpsters or public toilets. The persons who committed these acts 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 nowhere to turn for help, they abandoned their infants.

Abandoning a baby puts the child in extreme danger. It is also illegal. Too often, it results in the baby's death. Because of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, this tragedy doesn't ever have to happen in California again.

### **The Eighteenth Safely Surrendered Baby in California**

At 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 25, 2002, a healthy newborn baby was brought to St. Bernardine Medical Center in San Bernardino under the provisions of the California Safely Surrendered Baby Law.

This baby was the eighteenth child protected under California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law. As the law states, the baby's mother did not have to identify herself. When the baby was brought to the emergency room, he was examined by a pediatrician, who determined that the baby was healthy and doing fine. He was placed in a foster home for short-term care while the adoption process was started.

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**Every baby deserves a chance for a healthy life.  
If you or someone you know is considering  
giving up a child, learn about your options.**

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