

Illinois Safe Haven Law Offers Chance to Save Lives

Dawn Geras | PRESIDENT, SAVE ABANDONED BABIES FOUNDATION

At a recent event, there were hundreds of people, some of them firemen, in attendance. I had the opportunity to ask them if they knew about the Illinois “Safe Haven law.” Does it surprise you to learn that many did not? Let me ask: **DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE LAW?**

The Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act became effective on August 17, 2001. The Act, often referred to as the Safe Haven law, allows a parent to anonymously relinquish an unharmed newborn up to 30 days old to a staff member at a designated safe haven. Safe havens in Illinois are hospitals, emergency medical facilities, firehouses, police stations and county sheriff stations that have staff present. All designated safe havens are required to have a safe haven sign posted in a conspicuous place on the exterior of the building. Maybe you have seen this sign and wondered what it was about.

The law is intended to save the lives of the youngest, most vulnerable among us: newborn babies. It provides parents who might otherwise abandon a newborn in a dumpster or other unsafe place with a responsible, legal and anonymous option.

The law is simple and it works. Sixty-one babies have been safely and legally relinquished under the law since it was enacted nearly nine years ago. Tragically, 61 other babies were unsafely and illegally abandoned—so unsafely abandoned, that 30 of them did not survive.

Why isn't the law working for more babies? How many more innocent lives will be lost? Again, ask yourself, did YOU know about the law? The problem is that most people still don't. If an intelligent person like you didn't know, how can we expect those who need this information to know that this option exists?

Who needs to know about the law? Everyone does! Babies are illegally and unsafely discarded by parents of all ages, races and socioeconomic backgrounds. View the chart to see the make-up of mothers and newborns.

Known age of mothers		Known race of newborns	
Age 14–17	17.11 %	African/Black	27.72%
Age 18–24	44.74%	Caucasian/White	43.56%
Age 25–30	22.37%	Latino/Hispanic	20.79%
Age 31–41	15.79%	Mixed/Other	7.92%

(STATISTICS AS OF JUNE 1, 2010)

Now that you know about the law, will you help? It is not often that anyone has an opportunity to make a life-or-death difference. Please do your part to share what you now know about the safe haven law. Ask your family, friends and coworkers to spread the word, too. Be a part of saving the life of an innocent newborn baby.

Tell a friend. Talk about it. You might save a life.

The Save Abandoned Babies Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, 100% volunteer organization. The grass roots volunteers formed in 2000 to write the Abandoned Newborn Protection Act and lobby for its passage. The Foundation's mission is to prevent illegal abandonment of infants by making parents aware of safe and legal options. Almost every year since enacting the original law, the group has gone back to amend and improve the law. If you are interested in helping or would like more information, call the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation at 312.440.0229, visit WWW.SAVEABANDONEDBABIES.ORG or find us on Facebook at “Save Abandoned Babies.” ■

ILLINOIS SAVE HAVEN LAW IMPROVED

(Chicago, IL) July 20, 2010 – Governor Quinn signed House Bill 5459, sponsored by Sen. Donne Trotter (D-Chicago) and Rep. Elizabeth Coulson (R-Glenview).

The new law replaces the confusing, 14-page packet provided to parents who relinquish their newborn child at a Safe Haven site with three easy-to-read one-page brochures. Under the new law, relinquishing parents will receive information about the Safe Haven Law with a tear-off mailer that allows them to provide important medical information regarding the child, and how to

register for the Illinois Adoption Registry. They will also receive a vital health fact sheet with information on post-partum health issues. The new law is effective immediately.

These new brochures will help obtain vital health information about the infant and biological parents. It is hoped that parents who have used the law in the past and relinquished an infant, will also take advantage of these forms, which will be available on the Save Abandoned Babies web site. Parents may remain anonymous.