



# **Safe Haven Annual Report February 2025**

**Pursuant to  
Louisiana Children's Code - Article 1160**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As required by Louisiana Children's Code, Article 1160, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is submitting this report to both the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare regarding the Safe Haven Law.

A series of high-profile infant abandonment cases across the country prompted the Louisiana Legislature to combat the problem. In 2000, Louisiana enacted the Safe Haven Law, amending the Children's Code Articles 1101 and 1193 and Title XVII of the Children's Code, Articles 1701-1706, to provide for the Safe Haven relinquishment of newborns. The Code was further amended in 2003, 2018, 2021, and most recently in 2024. The entire Safe Haven Law, contained in LA Children's Code Chapter 13, Articles 1149-1160, provides a safe, legal, last resort alternative to abandonment.

Through House Concurrent Resolution 107 of the 2016 Legislative Session, a Safe Haven Consortium was formed of representatives of emergency care facilities and key stakeholder groups to assist DCFS in developing and maintaining a registry of Safe Haven sites and to promote best practices related to the Safe Haven Law. This resolution was codified in Louisiana Children's Code Article 1160. DCFS assists in organizing and facilitating the Consortium meetings. Included in Section 6.0 of this report is a summary of the Consortium's activities and recommendations, as required in the Resolution.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Department of Children and Family Services implemented policies and procedures in 2004 relating to the state's Safe Haven Law, which have been updated by the agency each time the law has been amended. Since 2004, 96 infants were safely relinquished through the Safe Haven Law at the point of initial contact with the State. The charts below provide details on the 96 successful relinquishments. In addition, there has not been an infant abandonment since February 2019, when a parent left an infant on the grounds of a hospital but not in the hands of an employee, thereby not qualifying as a Safe Haven relinquishment.

Number of Safe Haven Cases 2020 - 2024						
Region	Calendar Year					CY 2004-2024 Total
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Orleans	1	0	1	0	0	27
Baton Rouge	1	1	1	1	1	17
Covington	1	1	1	0	0	12
Thibodaux	0	0	0	0	0	2
Lafayette	2	0	0	1	1	14
Lake Charles	1	1	0	0	1	7
Alexandria	1	0	0	1	0	5
Shreveport	2	2	1	0	2	12
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>96</b>

\*Note: Data is through December 31, 2024.

Number of Safe Haven Cases 2004 - 2019																
Region	Calendar Year															
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Orleans	0	2	0	1	1	1	3	0	2	5	0	1	4	2	2	1
Baton Rouge	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	2	1	1
Covington	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Thibodaux	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Lafayette	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1
Lake Charles	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Alexandria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Shreveport	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

Safe Haven Cases from 2013-2024 by Receiving Emergency Designated Facility Type															
Receiving Emergency Designated Facility Type	Calendar Year														Total
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024			
Licensed Hospitals upon birth of child	7	2	3	4	5	3	7	9	3	2	3	4	<b>52</b>		
Other Licensed Hospitals	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	<b>8</b>		
Fire Stations	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	<b>8</b>		
Emergency Medical Service Providers (911)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>		
Child Advocacy Centers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
Medical Clinics	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>0</b>		
Public Health Units	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
Law Enforcement Stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
Crisis Pregnancy Centers	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>0</b>		
Licensed Rural Health Clinics	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
Licensed Ambulatory Surgical Centers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
Federally Qualified Health Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>70</b>		

\* Please note that Crisis Pregnancy Centers are no longer Safe Haven Sites and Licensed Rural Health Clinics, Licensed Ambulatory Surgical Centers, and Federally Qualified Health Units have been added.

\*Note: Data is through December 31, 2024.

### 3.0 PROGRAMMATIC UPDATES

Louisiana has made great strides in implementing best practices with Safe Haven relinquishments, ultimately resulting in changes in the law, increased public awareness efforts, revisions in provider training, and modifications to educational signage and brochures.

DCFS partnered with the National Safe Haven Alliance (NSHA) to offer a 24/7 hotline staffed by highly trained crisis response experts using a holistic approach to help parents who are considering relinquishing their baby under the Louisiana's Safe Haven Law. The NSHA crisis

response team uses a three-tiered approach to walk callers through their options—including parenting, adoption, and relinquishment—and establish a plan to fit their needs. New parents may believe they are unable to parent their baby due to extenuating circumstances. NSHA's experts can help navigate callers through those challenges and prepare for parenthood, or if desired, connect them to an adoption agency within the state. If neither parenting nor adoption is an option, the team can help the parent prepare for a safe and legal relinquishment of the baby to an authorized Safe Haven site employee or 911 dispatched responders. The crisis hotline number is 1-888-510-BABY (1-888-510-2229).

During the 2024 legislative session, a law was enacted to expand the allowed installation of baby boxes for the relinquishment of an infant to other sites that are manned 24 hours every day. Act 398 allows a parent who wishes to relinquish an infant to leave the infant in the care of any employee of a designated emergency care facility, or in a newborn safety device that is located in a designated emergency care facility that is manned continuously on a 24-hour basis, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The employee who mans the newborn safety device must be an emergency response provider, as defined in law, who is certified in neonatal resuscitation and pediatric advanced life support. The Louisiana Department of Health promulgated rules and regulations for the boxes located in licensed hospitals.

Best practice is for a parent to relinquish their infant to a person, ensuring the infant's safety and the potential for immediate medical care of the child, while allowing for support and or medical care for the mother or relinquishing parent, if needed. By promoting the surrender of a newborn with a person, there is often the opportunity to discuss other options, including the potential for parenting, temporary placement, or adoption planning. Surrendering to a trained professional ensures the relinquishing parent is giving informed consent for the child to be adopted. However, Safe Haven devices (boxes) provide an additional opportunity for surrender by the relinquishing parent.

The Safe Haven law applies to infants not more than 60 days old. During the 2024 legislative session, Act 145 was enacted to extend the timeframe for relinquishment of a child who has been cared for in the neonatal intensive care unit. With this change, for an infant admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit upon birth that has not been discharged from the hospital, the 60 days now commence from the date of initial discharge.

## **4.0 SAFE HAVEN PUBLIC AWARENESS**

For information about Safe Haven visit <https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/page/safe-haven>. DCFS has an online form for Safe Haven facilities to request materials for their Safe Haven site. The link to the form is <https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/form/3>. Information about the crisis hotline 1-888-510-BABY (1-888-510-2229), Safe Haven provider training, and an online directory to locate Safe Haven sites can be found on the DCFS website. The directory can be located at <https://www.dcfslouisiana.gov/safehaven/directory/>.

The Safe Haven section of the DCFS website recorded 11,194 page views from 8,200 users. The five most visited pages included the DCFS Safe Haven homepage, the "About Safe Haven" page,

the "Safe Haven Directory" page, the "Safe Haven for Care Providers" page, where emergency care facilities can get information on the Safe Haven law's requirements and download training materials, forms, and informational materials, and the "Safe Haven Annual Reports" webpage. Additionally, 510 individuals accessed the Safe Haven Materials Request form. The Safe Haven video page, featuring the 2021 animated video (with Spanish subtitles), a link to the Safe Haven site directory, and details about the NSHA 24/7 Crisis Hotline, received 271 visits.

## **5.0 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

### **Objective**

The DCFS website was updated in August 2024 to reflect amendments to the Children's Code required by Acts 398 and 145 of the 2024 legislative session. Safe Haven informational brochures were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese and are available for download on the DCFS website.

The DCFS communications team will continue to utilize the Safe Haven Alliance and video as the centerpiece of its 2025 public information efforts through the strategies listed below.

The department will support the Safe Haven Consortium in its efforts to ensure Safe Haven materials are readily available to stakeholders.

### **Target Audiences**

- Louisiana Safe Haven Consortium Members – This diverse group includes DCFS partners who share the department's commitment to reduce infant abandonment and increase the awareness of options.
- General Public – This includes anyone who might benefit from knowledge of the Safe Haven law and ways to access it, among them are DCFS clients—individuals receiving a variety of services from the agency.
- Key Mandated Reporters – This includes teachers, health care workers, counselors and others who deal with potential Safe Haven Program beneficiaries.
- Policy Makers and Stakeholders – DCFS stakeholders include the Administration, Legislators, state agencies and nonprofit organizations that would benefit from Safe Haven information.
- Safe Haven Relinquishment Sites – This includes licensed hospitals, local or parish public health units, licensed rural health units, licensed rural health clinics, licensed ambulatory surgical centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, emergency medical service providers, fire stations, law enforcement stations, and child advocacy centers accredited by the National Children's Alliance.

### **Strategies**

**Promotional Strategies include but are not limited to the following:**

- Updating and enhancing the DCFS website to support all communications.

- Promoting co-branding or re-branding of the video by partners to increase the likelihood of its adoption, use and promotion.
- Using social media and traditional media to increase awareness.
- Purchasing social media advertising.
- Presenting the video to legislators and other opinion leaders.
- Highlighting the video through targeted industry (i.e. nursing, education) presentations.

### **Monitoring Outcomes**

- DCFS will use social media and website analytics to track the effectiveness of communication efforts and gauge engagement.
- The department will monitor media coverage of Safe Haven press releases and related promotions to ensure accuracy of reporting and determine public engagement resulting from the efforts.
- Requests for printed materials will be monitored and tracked for future print orders. Inquiries from legislators and other stakeholders in regards to the Safe Haven Law will also be tracked.

## **6.0 REPORT FROM THE SAFE HAVEN CONSORTIUM**

The Safe Haven Consortium is comprised of representatives from the Louisiana Department of Health; Louisiana Hospital Association; Louisiana Emergency Response Network; Louisiana Ambulance Alliance; Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners; Louisiana State Board of Nursing; Professional Fire Fighters Association of Louisiana; Louisiana Fire Chiefs Association; Louisiana Sheriffs' Association; Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police; Louisiana Peace Officers Association; Louisiana State Troopers Association; Magnolia State Peace Officers Association of Louisiana; Children's Advocacy Centers of Louisiana; National Association of Social Workers, Louisiana Chapter; Louisiana School Boards Association; Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools; Louisiana Association of Educators; Louisiana Federation of Teachers; and Louisiana Association of Student Councils. The Safe Haven Consortium is currently reaching out to the agencies to ensure that there is representation by all agencies.

Additional Stakeholder groups that participate in the Consortium meetings include the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, Louisiana CASA, Louisiana Right to Life, and Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families.

The Consortium's chairperson is Paige Hargrove, Executive Director of the Louisiana Emergency Response Network. The vice chairperson position is currently vacant.

One Consortium meeting was held on September 26, 2024. The focus continues to be on increasing public awareness of Safe Haven. Safe Haven materials (brochures, posters, cards, and/or decals) were distributed to other agencies and providers (ex. Health units) that was geared toward alternative options parents have available to them through the assistance of the National Safe Haven Alliance Hotline, along with the Safe Haven option.

The Consortium is working on developing a mailing list of all designated Safe Haven sites. Once complete, each location will be asked to confirm accuracy of their site information on the Safe Haven Site Locator. They will also receive information on how to request Safe Haven materials. The goal of the Consortium is to have annual contact with all Safe Haven sites in order to educate any new staff and ensure there is an understanding of their obligations under the Safe Haven law.