



Safe Haven Law Annual Report January 2019

**Pursuant to
HCR 107 - Louisiana 2016 Regular Session
and
ACT 134 - Louisiana 2018 Regular Session**

Table of Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
2.0	OVERVIEW OF DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS	3
3.0	2018 PROGRAMMATIC UPDATES	4
4.0	SAFE HAVEN PUBLIC AWARENESS	5
5.0	COMMUNICATIONS PLAN	6
6.0	REPORT FROM THE SAFE HAVEN CONSORTIUM	9

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. That Code was again amended in 2003 and most recently in 2018. 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.

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (then the Department of Social Services) implemented policies and procedures in 2004 relating to the state's Safe Haven Law. Several pieces of legislation have been passed since the implementation of the Safe Haven Law, all established to promote the use of the Safe Haven Law as an alternative to abandonment of an infant.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

DCFS (then the Department of Social Services) implemented policies and procedures in 2004 relating to the state's Safe Haven Law. Since 2004, 61 infants were safely relinquished at the point of initial contact with the State. The chart below provides details on the 61 successful relinquishments.

Number of Safe Haven Cases CY 2004 - 2018																
Region	Calendar Year															Total
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Orleans	0	2	0	1	1	1	3	0	2	5	0	1	4	2	2	24
Baton Rouge	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	2	1	11
Covington	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	8
Thibodaux	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Lafayette	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	9
Lake Charles	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Alexandria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shreveport	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	2	1	4	2	3	6	2	4	11	2	5	6	5	6	61

Safe Haven Cases from 2013-2018 by Receiving Emergency Designated Facility Type							
Region	Calendar Year						Total
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Licensed Hospitals upon birth of child	7	2	3	4	5	3	24
Other Licensed Hospitals	3	0	0	0	0	2	5
Fire Stations	1	0	2	1	0	1	5
Emergency Medical Service Providers (911)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Child Advocacy Centers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Clinics	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0
Public Health Units	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Law Enforcement Stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crisis Pregnancy Centers	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0
Licensed Rural Health Clinics	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
Licensed Ambulatory Surgical Centers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
Federally Qualified Health Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
TOTAL	11	2	5	6	5	6	35
*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.							

3.0 2018 PROGRAMMATIC UPDATES

Through House Concurrent Resolution 107 of the 2016 Legislative Session, a Safe Haven Consortium was formed of a select group of representatives of emergency care facilities and key stakeholder groups to assist the Department in developing and maintaining a registry of Safe Haven sites and to promote best practice related to the Safe Haven Law. DCFS coordinated and hosted two Safe Haven Consortium meetings in 2018, the first being on January 12, 2018, and an additional meeting was held on November 5, 2018. DCFS assists in organizing and facilitating these meetings. Included in Section 6.0 of this report is a summary of the Consortium's activities and recommendations.

The Safe Haven Registry was published on the DCFS website in October 2017. At that time, the law defined a designated emergency care facility as any medical clinic, any hospital licensed in Louisiana, any fire station, any police station, any public health unit, any emergency medical service provider, any crisis pregnancy center, or any child advocacy center. The creation of the registry shed light on the need for clarity in the legal definitions of “designated emergency care facilities.” As a result of the work of the Safe Haven Consortium, DCFS proposed legislative changes to further define Safe Haven sites. These recommendations resulted in the passage of Act 134, modifying Safe Haven Laws to clarify who are considered Safe Haven sites. Crisis Pregnancy Centers were removed as a Safe Haven site, and the following were added/modified as approved Safe Haven sites:

- Any hospital licensed in the state of Louisiana;
- The following medical clinics during normal and customary hours of operation: local or parish public health units, licensed rural health clinics, licensed ambulatory surgical centers, and Federally Qualified Health Centers;
- Any manned fire station;

- Any manned law enforcement station; and
- Any Child Advocacy Center accredited by the National Children’s Alliance, during normal and customary hours of operation.

In addition, a definition of “Emergency Medical Service Provider” was added to include any licensed emergency medical service provider, when dispatched as a result of a “911” call, from a parent who wishes to relinquish his infant under the Safe Haven Law. The provisions set forth in the LA Children’s Code Article 1152, which apply to Designated Emergency Care Facilities, also apply to Emergency Medical Service Providers.

Due to the passage of Act 134, updates were made to the DCFS website, Safe Haven Registry, and Safe Haven materials to reflect the changes that were made to the Safe Haven law.

4.0 SAFE HAVEN PUBLIC AWARENESS

ACTIVITIES TO DATE

In February 2009, DCFS launched a statewide public awareness campaign for Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law. The campaign featured billboards, brochures, public service announcements for radio and television, and the creation of a website (www.louisianasafehaven.com). The Department also designed posters, business cards, and window decals for Safe Haven facilities. In July 2009, an online form was created for Safe Haven facilities to request materials for their Safe Haven site.

Since 2009, DCFS has appeared in radio, television, and newspaper reports bringing awareness to Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law as an alternative to abandonment. The Department also periodically issued news releases about relinquishments and updates to the Safe Haven Law. The issue has been the focus of intense media coverage in instances of infant abandonments, some resulting in tragedy or near-tragedy. The Department has responded through proactive media outreach and response, as well as postings to the department’s Facebook and Twitter accounts (www.twitter.com/LouisianaDCFS and www.facebook.com/LADCFS), all in an effort to inform the public about the safe, legal alternative to infant abandonment.

In 2013, when the relinquishment age was changed to 60 days old, redesigned brochures and posters were printed. Updated packets of posters, brochures, cards and decals were then mailed to Louisiana Safe Haven facilities.

In 2017 there was an increase in the requests from Safe Haven sites for publications on Safe Haven. In 2017, DCFS distributed at least 88 packets of information, as compared to 42 in 2016. The packets are individualized, but contain such information as posters, decals, brochures and cards.

In May 2017, DCFS updated its Safe Haven brochure to reflect changes in the law.

In October 2017, the department launched an online mapping tool designed to help the public locate hospitals, fire stations and other facilities where they can legally relinquish a newborn through the Safe Haven Law. Both the Safe Haven “locator” and the updated brochure were funded through a grant by the Children’s Trust Fund. In addition, DCFS updated its online training video for Safe Haven providers.

DCFS made the launch of the mapping tool the focus of a public awareness campaign in October 2017 and of media outreach in 2018, as the Communications Office used news of child abandonments as opportunities to share information about the Safe Haven Law.

In addition to conducting interviews and providing Safe Haven information to the media, DCFS updated and reprinted Safe Haven materials in 2018. The Communications Office revised and ordered new Safe Haven brochures, information cards and posters in October 2018. It updated the Safe Haven listings in the mapping tool. And, as part of a department-wide website redesign project, it enhanced its online Safe Haven resources, including information about the Safe Haven Law.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Objective

The Department of Children and Family Services aims to increase public awareness of the Louisiana Safe Haven Law through the implementation of an annual communications plan. The purpose of this communications plan is to bolster efforts to inform the community about the Safe Haven Law. Targeted audiences include educational institutions of medicine, nursing, law enforcement, firefighting, or other institutions where professionals are training to work in a Safe Haven facility or be involved with Safe Haven relinquishments, as well as other community organizations that would benefit from Safe Haven information.

In 2019, the Communications Office plans to focus proactive communication activities during the month of April, Child Abuse Prevention Month. However, it will also take advantage of news events throughout the year to share Safe Haven information through the news media.

In addition, DCFS will look at prior abandonment cases to identify common factors or trends that can help focus outreach efforts.

Target Audiences

DCFS Staff – The DCFS Team serves on the front line with other audiences. Currently, there are approximately 3,400 staff working within the Department.

General Public – The public includes anyone who might benefit from knowledge of the Safe Haven law and ways to access it. This generally includes young people of child-bearing age and their families. It also includes DCFS clients – individuals receiving a variety of services from the agency.

Each month, DCFS touches close to a quarter of Louisiana’s citizens through the public services offered.

Stakeholders – DCFS stakeholders include the Administration, state Legislature, state partner agencies, educational institutions of medicine and nursing schools, law enforcement, firefighting, or other institutions where professionals are training to work in a Safe Haven site, and other community 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

Partnerships

- Continue working with Safe Haven relinquishment sites to provide informational materials as requested. Create social media graphics that highlight partners and tag these partners in our posts.
- Identify new community organizations for potential partnerships, with the help of stakeholders. Targeted organizations would be those whose clients would benefit from additional information on the Safe Haven Laws.

Media Relations

- Disseminate news releases, letters to the editor, or editorials to media outlets across the state, as appropriate. Potential topics include general information on the Safe Haven Law, information regarding children surrendered through Safe Haven and FAQs about the Safe Haven Law.
- Make broadcast appearances about Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law.
- Respond to media and public inquiries about the Safe Haven Law in a timely manner.

Social Media

- Post about the Safe Haven Law to Department social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). Social Media posts will be monitored through analytics for audience reach.
- Post news releases or published editorials on DCFS social media accounts, as appropriate, for additional coverage.
- Create a cover photo image for the Department Twitter and Facebook pages specific to Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law. This cover photo should be designated as the page’s banner for a minimum length of one month.

- Create social media graphics aimed at informing the public about the Safe Haven program and target key audiences, as appropriate.

Program Materials

- Safe Haven materials currently in print will be reviewed annually for necessary revisions and reordered as the need arises and as funding becomes available. Printed materials include brochures, posters, business cards and site window decals.
- Safe Haven facilities and DCFS stakeholders can request printed materials through an online form published to the DCFS website. Safe Haven facilities are able to request posters, brochures, decals and business cards. DCFS stakeholders that are not a designated Safe Haven facility should only request posters or brochures as the business cards are given after a relinquishment, and window decals designate Safe Haven sites.
- If funding is available, advertisements – such as billboards, bus advertisements, radio ads, and social media ads – should be considered as a way to reach additional members of target audiences.

Website

- DCFS will continue to update and enhance its online Safe Haven resources, including its mapping tool.

Monitoring Outcomes

DCFS will monitor media coverage of Safe Haven press releases and related promotions to determine public engagement resulting from the efforts.

DCFS will also use its website analytics to track the number of people who visit www.louisianasafehaven.com each month and monitor if there is an increase in visitors during media opportunities.

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

Through HCR 107 of the 2016 Louisiana Legislature, the Department of Children and Family Services convened a consortium of emergency care facilities designated in the Safe Haven Law and Safe Haven stakeholder groups, hereafter referred to as 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. Additional Stakeholder groups that participate in the Consortium include the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Education, LouisianaChildren.org, and Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana.

Two Consortium meetings were held in 2018. The Consortium's chairperson is Caroline Roemer, with the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools; and the vice chairperson is Paige Hargrove, with the Louisiana Emergency Response Network.

These meetings included reviewing the Consortium's accomplishments within the last year, including recommendations made that resulted in the passage of Act 134, modifying the Safe Haven Law to clarify who are considered Safe Haven sites. The Department of Children and Family Services(DCFS) also provided information about updates that were made to the DCFS website, Safe Haven Registry, and Safe Haven materials to reflect the changes that were made to the Safe Haven law. In addition, the last meeting discussion was centered around the need for more community out-reach in educating individuals on the Safe Haven Law. Committee members agreed that the goal for the next year will be more of an emphasis being placed on education and public awareness specifically reaching the general public through social media.