

# Safe Haven for Newborns

## Information for Parents

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### What is a Safe Haven?

The Safe Haven Act is an Iowa law that allows parents – or another person who has the parent’s authorization – to leave an infant up to 90 days old at a hospital or health care facility or with a first responder who responds to a 911 call without fear of arrest or going to court.

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### Why It’s Important

As a parent, or authorized person, if you leave an infant at a Safe Haven:

- You cannot be charged with abandonment of the infant.
  - You do not need to go to court.
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### What Happens?

When an infant is left at a Safe Haven:

- Custody of the infant is given to the Iowa Department of Health Human Services (HHS).
  - Any identifying information given when leaving the infant is kept confidential.
  - A hearing to terminate the rights of both parents will be held within 30 days and the infant will be placed for adoption.
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### Court Hearing to Terminate Parental Rights

The date and time of the court hearing to terminate parental rights will be published in the newspaper.

- If either parent wishes to receive special notice of the court hearing, name and address may be given to:
  - The Safe Haven where the infant was left.
  - The Clerk of Court in the county where the Safe Haven is located.
  - The Putative Father Registry.
- You do not need to go to court unless you want to.

**If You Change Your Mind**

If you decide you want to keep custody of the infant, **either parent** may go to the court hearing in person and ask the Juvenile Court to grant custody of the infant to you.

At the hearing you must be able to show the court evidence -

- That you are the parent of the child, and
- That granting custody to you would be in the infant's best interest.

The judge may order services to help you learn to care for your child.

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**According to The Law**

According to state law:

Either parent of a newborn infant whose custody was released under the Safe Haven Act may intervene in court proceedings held regarding the infant and request that the Juvenile Court grant custody of the infant to the parent. The requester must show by clear and convincing evidence that they are the parent of the infant. If the court determines that the person is the parent and that granting custody of the infant is in the infant's best interest, the court will issue an order granting custody to the parent. The court may order services for the infant and parent as are in the best interest of the infant.

For more information:

- The Safe Haven Act can be found in Iowa Code Chapter 233 at: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/233.pdf>
- The Code of Iowa is available at public libraries or on line at: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>