



Safe Haven Annual Report

January 2026

**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

DCFS 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, 98 infants have been safely relinquished through the Safe Haven Law at the point of initial contact with the State. The charts below provide details on the 98 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.

Region	Number of Safe Haven Cases CY 2020 - 2025						
	Calendar Year						CY 2004-2025 Total
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Orleans	1	0	1	0	0	0	27
Baton Rouge	1	1	1	1	1	0	17
Covington	1	1	1	0	0	0	12
Thibodaux	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Lafayette	2	0	0	1	1	1	15
Lake Charles	1	1	0	0	1	0	7
Alexandria	1	0	0	1	0	1	6
Shreveport	2	2	1	0	2	0	12
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	5	4	3	5	2	98

*Note: Data is through December 9, 2025.

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
Total	2	2	1	4	2	3	6	2	4	11	2	5	6	5	6	9

Safe Haven Cases from 2013-2025 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	2025		
Licensed Hospitals upon birth of child	7	2	3	4	5	3	7	9	3	2	3	4	2		54
Other Licensed Hospitals	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0		8
Fire Stations	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0		8
Emergency Medical Service Providers (911)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0		2
Child Advocacy Centers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	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	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Law Enforcement Stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	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	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Licensed Ambulatory Surgical Centers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Federally Qualified Health Units	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
TOTAL	11	2	5	6	5	6	9	9	5	4	3	5	2		72

* 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 9, 2025.

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 daily. 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. Employees manning the newborn safety device must be emergency response providers, as defined in law, and 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. During this reporting year, all infants relinquished have been left in the care of an employee of a designated emergency care facility.

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. Safe Haven baby boxes provide an additional opportunity for surrender by the relinquishing parent.

The Safe Haven law applies to infants who are not more than 60 days old. Act 145, enacted during the 2024 legislative session, extended the timeframe for relinquishment of a child who has been cared for in the neonatal intensive care unit. For infants admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit upon birth, the 60-day relinquishment timeframe begins on the date of the baby's initial discharge.

4.0 SAFE HAVEN PUBLIC AWARENESS

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

The Safe Haven section of the DCFS website recorded 6,695 page views from 4,303 users. The five most visited pages included the DCFS Safe Haven homepage, the “Safe Haven Directory” page, the “About Safe Haven” page, the “Safe Haven Materials Request” page/form, and the “Safe Haven for Care Providers” page, where emergency care facilities can get information on the requirements of the law and download training materials, forms, and informational materials.

DCFS posted 11 social media messages about Safe Haven throughout 2025. On Facebook, the posts had a total reach of 13,997, with 186 click-throughs to the webpage and 81 post shares. The following message received the greatest response, “If you’re overwhelmed and don’t know where to turn, Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law provides a safe, legal option to give up custody of your newborn in the first 60 days – no shame, no judgment. Help is available. Learn more: dcfs.la/haven.” The post received 62 clicks and 17 shares with a reach of 2,269 with one share. Another share garnered a reach of 3,493, with 51 click-throughs and 23 shares.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Objective

The Safe Haven poster and brochure located on the DCFS website were updated in 2025 to reflect changes in the law.

The DCFS communications team will continue to utilize the Safe Haven Alliance and video in public information efforts through the strategies listed below. The communications team will also continue to use messaging that resonates with the public, making the law easier to understand, supporting the Safe Haven Consortium’s efforts, and ensuring 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.
- 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 regard 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's position is currently vacant.

A Consortium meeting was held on September 18, 2025. 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) geared towards alternative options for parents through the National Safe Haven Alliance Hotline, along with the Safe Haven option. The locations of the first and second Safe Haven Baby Box were introduced at the meeting. It was mentioned that on April 30, 2025, the St. Tammany Fire Station located at 322 Bouscaren Street in Slidell, Louisiana installed the Baby Box to provide a secure and anonymous option for parents in crisis to surrender their newborns. Following the success of the first Baby Box in Slidell, the Covington Fire Department became the second location to have a Safe Haven Baby Box.

The Consortium is developing a mailing list of all designated Safe Haven sites. Each location will be asked to confirm the accuracy of their information on the Safe Haven Site Locator. They will also receive information on how to request Safe Haven materials. The Consortium's goal is to have yearly contact with all Safe Haven sites to educate new staff and ensure there is an understanding of their obligations under the Safe Haven law.