

Safe Haven is a Responsible Choice.



Information for D.C. parents leaving a newborn at a hospital

When you just can't keep and care for your newborn, help is here.

The District of Columbia safe haven law protects newborns and their parents. As long as you are a D.C. resident and your baby is less than 14 days old and not abused or neglected, you may give the baby to workers at this hospital.

You don't need to give your name. You won't get in trouble. Your baby will have good care and a safe start in life.



Government of the District of Columbia

What happens at the hospital?

The hospital will:

- Make sure you are the baby's parent and that you live in D.C. These are basic questions you must answer.
- Ask you to fill out some forms with health information. You don't have to fill out the forms, but giving a medical history will help the baby. If you want, you can just give medical information and leave out your name. If you do give your name, it will be confidential.
- Check the baby to make sure s/he is unharmed and less than 14 days old. The hospital will provide any health care the baby needs.
- Put the baby in the care of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) within 23 hours.

What happens to me?

When you use a safe haven, you are giving up your rights as the baby's parent. You pave the way for the baby to be adopted. That's a responsible choice. No one will call the police about you. You won't get in trouble. After answering the basic questions the hospital asks, you're free to leave at any time.

What happens to the baby?

CFSA will:

- Make sure the baby is safe and has good care.
- Tell the Superior Court of the District of Columbia about the baby. CFSA and the court will work together to make decisions about the baby's future.
- Publish a notice three times over the next three months to try to find the other parent. CFSA will not use your name or any facts about you in the published notice. CFSA will also check with police about whether anyone reported a missing infant. The law requires these steps. The other parent has 20 days to respond after CFSA publishes the third notice. If not, the other parent gives up rights as the baby's parent.
- Get permission from the court for the baby to be adopted.

What can I do about feeling so upset?

Giving up a baby is hard, even when it's the right thing to do. It's a big experience that may have left you with many strong feelings. Talking to a trained professional who cares and understands can help you feel better. Reach out to the DC Department of Mental Health for help that's free of charge.

- Call the 24-hour Access Helpline at 1-888-793-4357.
- Visit the clinic at 35 K Street NE. The phone number there is 202-442-4202.

Will the baby get a good home?

The baby has a very good chance of being adopted into a loving family. CFSA has a list of people waiting to adopt. Many are hoping for an infant. CFSA and its partner agencies carefully interview, train, and check the backgrounds of people who want to adopt. This includes making sure they:

- Have no criminal or child abuse history.
- Have room in their home for a child.
- Can support the child financially.
- Can provide a safe, loving home.

This opportunity for a good life is a gift from you to the baby.

What if I change my mind about giving up my baby?

Call CFSA at 1-855-442-2229. You must call within 14 days of leaving your baby at the hospital safe haven. You'll need to give your name and have a medical test to prove you are the baby's parent. A CFSA social worker will visit your home to make sure it's safe and to offer help you and the baby may need.

Safe Haven Options for Residents of Neighboring States

Maryland

Parent who is a Maryland resident may take a newborn of 10 days or less to a hospital or police station.

Virginia

Parent who is a Virginia resident may take a newborn of 14 days or less to a hospital emergency room or emergency medical rescue squad.