Safe Surrender Baby Law
(SSBL)

WHAT IS THE SAFE SURRENDER BABY LAW?

The Safe Surrender Baby Laws are in place so that parents can easily and safely give up their children. These laws are also know as:

- Safe Haven Baby Law
- The Newborn Abandonment Law

These laws are now in effect in all 50 US states. Each state has its own specific laws for the SSBL. Each state has specific places where the baby can be given up, such as a:

- Hospital emergency room.
- Police station.
- Fire department.

In North Carolina the baby may be taken to a "responsible adult", such as an on duty health care provider (doctor, nurse, etc.), law enforcement officer (police officer), social services worker or emergency medical services worker, instead of to a specific place. In all cases, when a baby is surrendered, the baby must be given to a person. It is illegal and dangerous to leave the baby at a door or place with no one to receive the baby.

WHY IS THERE A SAFE SURRENDER BABY LAW?

The SSBL was made to protect babies from abandonment. Abandonment is illegal and very dangerous for the baby. These laws help prevent:

- Abuse.
- Neglect.
- Death of the baby.

It also helps the parents who cannot properly and safely care for the baby.

HOW DOES THE SSBL WORK?

A parent who is unable or unwilling to take care of their baby can privately, safely and legally give up the baby within a certain number of days after birth depending on the individual state law. The baby can be taken to a place or person by the parent, legal guardian or legal custodian with the person's name kept private and with assurance that the baby will be properly cared for and there will not be any arrest or prosecution for child abandonment as long as the baby has not been abused or neglected. When possible, but not required, the parent or legal person will be asked to give:

- Information about the prenatal care and birth of the baby.
- Any medical problems with the baby.
- A medical and background history of the mother and father.
- Family history of medical, mental, physical or congenital (born with) problems.

This will help with the future health and proper care of the baby. This is usually done with a questionnaire that the parent or legal custodian can fill out.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BABY?

The person getting the baby will make sure that the baby is:

- Warm.
- Fed.
- Comfortable.
- Unharmed.

The baby will get a medical evaluation and any necessary treatment. The baby will be placed in a foster home or a home for adoption after the period for reclaiming the baby has ended. If the baby is given to an individual responsible adult, he or she should call the local medical emergency service and social services.

CAN THE BABY BE RECLAIMED BY THE PARENT?

Each state has its own period of time in which the law allows a parent to reclaim the baby. A parent who may not have known that the baby was given up through the SSBL can go to the proper authorities and apply to reclaim the baby through that individual state's process. In each case, to reclaim the baby, a social worker will meet with the parent or parents and evaluate the:

- Home situation.
- Resources and environment.

The social worker and authorities will then decide if it is in the best interest and safe for the baby to return to the parent or parents. At the time that the baby is given up, matching identification bracelets are placed on the baby and parent or legal custodian to make sure the parent and baby match when reclaiming the baby.

To find out about the laws in your state, visit www.safesurrendersite.com. or call the Social Service Association of your state.

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