

# Illinois' Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act

No shame. No blame. No names.



# Table of Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTORY LETTER</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>II. SAFE HAVEN LAW CURRICULUM OVERVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III. Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Background and Key Provisions of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>IV. TEACHING TIPS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>V. DISCUSSION STARTERS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VI. LESSON PLANS</b>	
<b>Lesson #1: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>9</b>
Vocabulary List	<b>7</b>
Video of Public Service Announcement on the Law	<b>12</b>
Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Background and Key Provisions of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (see page 4)	
Reasons for Abandonment - Why Do Parents Abandon Their Children?	<b>13</b>
<b>Lesson #2: THE LAW AS A SOLUTION</b>	<b>14</b>
Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Questions and Answers	<b>15</b>
Resources to Contact for Help	<b>18</b>
What Would You Do? Situations	<b>19</b>
<b>Lesson #3: THE BIG PICTURE: CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT THE LAW</b>	<b>20</b>
"Forever Bound" by 'Shoebox Baby' Mom and Nurse Reconnect Twelve Years Later	<b>20</b>
Questions on Alternatives and Responsibility	<b>20</b>
Comparing Scenarios of Safe Relinquishment vs. Abandonment	<b>21</b>
<b>VII. OPTIONS FOR ASSESSING STUDENT KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>VIII. EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES OPTIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>IX. SAVING LIVES: SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH ADDITIONAL PROJECTS</b>	<b>25</b>



Dear Educator,

***Ask your students: How excited would you be to know you saved a life?***

In 2001, Illinois enacted the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (325 ILCS 2), commonly called a "Safe Haven Law." The law allows a parent to relinquish an unharmed infant legally, safely, and anonymously with no fear of prosecution or questions asked, to personnel at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire or police station.

Illinois law requires health education programs to provide course materials and instruction to inform students of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act. To assist you in meeting this requirement, the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services are pleased to provide this teacher's unit. The materials are consistent with Illinois State Board of Education goals that students can apply decision-making skills related to the protection of individual, family and community health.

The law has saved over 130 infants from abandonment in Illinois, by providing a crucial safe and legal option to desperate parents with unplanned pregnancies. However, unsafe, illegal abandonments continue, in many cases, due to a lack of familiarity with the law. Teaching about this law will increase awareness and may in fact someday save a life.

Utilizing the law protects a desperate parent from making a life-changing choice to abandon their baby, a decision that will have long-lasting ramifications. Your instruction on the law is vital to its continued effectiveness. We hope you find this information helpful, and welcome any suggestions for improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn M. Geras".

Dawn Geras, President  
Save Abandoned Babies Foundation

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## **SAFE HAVEN LAW CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

This curriculum provides informative and easy-to-use classroom materials about the *Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act* (also called the Safe Haven Law).

### **Objectives:**

After completing this curriculum, students will be able to:

- Identify key facts about Illinois' Safe Haven Law.
- List possible reasons behind abandonment.
- Explain the difference between illegal abandonment and relinquishment under the law.
- Know what resources are available and how they can help someone in danger of abandoning an infant.
- Think critically about larger issues, including laws, ethics, personal responsibility, and adoption alternatives.

### **Teacher Resources:**

- Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Background and Key Provisions of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act
- Teaching Tips
- Discussion Starters
- Sample lesson plans 1 through 3, and accompanying written and video materials
- Potential Student Assessments
- Interdisciplinary Teaching Options
- Additional Projects

### **Additional Materials:**

- Safe Haven pamphlets and posters (available In English, Spanish, and Polish)
- Order form from the Department of Children and Family Services for additional posters and brochures
- Wallet cards (reproducible sheet intended to be copied onto heavy-weight paper stock and cut into wallet sized reference cards for students)
- Safe Haven sign sample

# ILLINOIS' SAFE HAVEN LAW: BACKGROUND AND KEY PROVISIONS OF THE ABANDONED NEWBORN INFANT PROTECTION ACT

## The Problem

From 1991 to 1998, the incidence of newborn abandonment in public places increased 62 percent across the country. Dramatic accounts in the newspapers and television underscored the problem. In March 1998, a baby was found by two 13-year old boys who saw a body floating face down in 14 feet of water in the California Aqueduct. The red-haired, 20-inch girl was tagged Baby Jane Doe No. 21 and given the name "Grace." Sheriff's deputies initially thought she may have been strangled before being dumped, although they may never know for sure because the body was badly decomposed.

## The Start of the Solution

Similar tragedies were occurring in other states. In Alabama, a pilot program attempted a new legislative focus: protecting the newborn at practically any cost. On September 1, 1999, Texas became first state to pass a law allowing a parent to relinquish an infant anonymously. Other states began to follow with similar laws and by 2009, all 50 states had enacted a "Safe Haven Law", although specifics vary from state to state.

In August 2001, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (Public Act 92-0432). Similar to other states, Illinois' Safe Haven Law allows a parent to safely and legally relinquish an unharmed infant, up to 30 days old, anonymously and without fear of prosecution.

## The Law's Main Points and Conditions:

The law's intent is to assure the safety of newborns who might otherwise be unsafely abandoned. The law provides a safe alternative to parents who may be under severe emotional distress or unable to provide for the basic needs of an infant. The law:

- Allows the birth parent(s) to legally, anonymously and safely relinquish an unharmed infant up to 30 days old to personnel at a hospital, emergency medical care facility, police station, firehouse, college/university police station, or Illinois State Police district headquarters with no questions asked or fear of prosecution.
- Protects the identity of the relinquishing parent(s).
- Protects the parent(s) from arrest or prosecution for abandonment.
- Does not require that names or other information be given when the unharmed infant is safely relinquished, but offers an *Information Packet* to the relinquishing parent which includes a voluntary medical and family history questionnaire that can be completed and sent to the state, anonymously, if desired, for use by the adoptive parents.
- Provides local resources for pregnancy and grief counseling.

- Provides a safe place for newborns with a pre-adoptive family during the legal process of terminating parental rights and preparing for adoption; provides that the infant does not enter the foster care system.
- Allows 60 days for the parent(s) to petition the court to reclaim the infant, dependent upon counseling and a DCFS inquiry into the family and its living conditions. In most cases, after 60 days, parental rights are terminated.

### **Achievements and Ongoing Goals**

Since the law's beginning in 2001, over 130 babies have been saved from unsafe abandonment. These children have found a life with loving adoptive families – a life that may have ended in infancy, had it not been for the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act – the Safe Haven Law.

The work is not done, however. Babies continue to be unsafely abandoned and even killed, in many cases, due to a lack of knowledge of the law. Therefore, spreading the word about the law is critical to saving infants' lives and allowing fearful parents to choose life for their child, despite their desperate circumstances.

## TEACHING TIPS

You may find that talking about unwanted pregnancies and abandoned babies evokes strong responses or makes some students feel uncomfortable. However, through progressive discussions, students can come to understand the provisions of the law and circumstances that lead to its use. The usual format for good classroom discussion is applicable:

- **Abandonment** refers to an infant that has been illegally abandoned.
- **Relinquishment** refers to an infant that has been legally handed over to staff at a Safe Haven site.
- **Consider students' developmental level.** Use the Discussion Starters to tailor your presentation to your students' level of emotional development/maturity, beginning with concrete items and progressing to more abstract aspects.
- **Create a comfortable atmosphere.** Be open to what your students are saying and encourage them to listen to one another with respect and without interruption.
- **Encourage participation from everyone.** Review your classroom culture regarding differences of opinion and allowing other people to voice their ideas before you begin your discussions. Comments such as "good point," "excellent ideas," "great question," or "a thoughtful response" may encourage more open dialogue.
- **Provide a variety of discussion formats.** Some students find it hard to express their views in a large group but might feel more comfortable speaking out in a smaller group, or utilizing anonymous written questions that you read to the group, and then discuss.
- **Allow silence.** Silence can be valuable in allowing time for students to process information or collect their thoughts for a response. Remember to use a five second "wait time" between the time you ask a question and solicit a response.
- **Consult outside resources.** When you don't know the answer to a question, try to find the information and provide it later. For additional information go to: [www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org) or contact [info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org](mailto:info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org)

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

The following questions may be used or adapted to introduce each of the three lessons.

### STARTER I.

Begin by showing the Safe Haven logo (picture of baby's head resting in adult hand).

1. What does the picture of the baby's head resting in someone's hand mean to you?
2. To whom might the hand belong?
3. The person who owns the hand -- what do you think they're like?
4. Does the baby look squirmy or fussy, or restful and peaceful?
5. How old do you think the baby might be?
6. This picture has been made into a sign. Has anyone seen this sign posted? Where? This sign is required to be posted on the outside of certain buildings. Do you know which ones? Do you know why?
7. The purpose of the sign is to let the public know that the building is considered a "Safe Haven" for infants under an Illinois law. Can you guess what a Safe Haven is?
8. There is a law in Illinois called the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act. People call it a "Safe Haven Law" for short. Let me tell you about it:
  - If a parent does not feel that he/she can keep and care of his/her baby, he/she can give up the infant, remain anonymous, and not be prosecuted for abandonment.
  - The infant must be:
    - 30 days old or younger
    - Not harmed
  - The parent must hand the infant to personnel (a worker) at a hospital, fire station, police station, or campus police station. This is a "relinquishment" under the law.
  - The worker will take the baby, and offer the parent an *Information Packet* to take home. The parent is not required to take the information.
  - The parent may then leave, with no questions asked. He/she does not have to give a name, or anything else.
9. Can you think of an example of when someone may feel they need to use the Safe Haven Law to relinquish their baby?
10. Do you think talking to a trusted adult might help the parent who is considering using the Safe Haven Law?



## **STARTER II.**

1. If a desperate parent doesn't know about the Safe Haven Law, he/she might actually consider abandoning their baby. What is the difference between abandoning a baby and relinquishing a baby under the Safe Haven Law?
2. When might a person feel they need to use the Safe Haven Law to give up their baby?
3. Read the attached "Situations." After reading each one, ask, "Might this person feel they need to use the Safe Haven Law to give up their baby?"
4. Is using the Safe Haven Law their only choice?

## **STARTER III.**

After reviewing one or more of the "Situations," ask the following:

1. Try to imagine how the parent in these situations might be feeling. If he/she is scared, he/she might not be thinking logical, reasonable thoughts. What are some negative actions the parent might think of? What are some positive alternatives?
2. Discuss other safe options the parent(s) might consider, besides the Safe Haven Law. These could include birthing in a hospital or making an adoption plan for the infant.
3. Of all the positive and negative alternatives that a parent might consider, which would be fair/unfair for the baby? Which may be best for the baby, under the circumstances?
4. Which would be fair for the mother? The father?
5. Can relinquishing a baby through the Safe Haven Law be a responsible action? Under what circumstances?
6. If you were a good friend of a mother or father in a desperate situation, what would you advise her/him to do?

## Lesson Plans

### Lesson #1: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

#### Objectives: Students will:

- Identify the problem of abandoned infants
- Identify reasons for infant abandonment
- Explain the difference between abandonment and relinquishment under the law
- Express in oral, written or artistic format, their initial reactions to the ideas of abandonment and relinquishment

#### Materials:

1. Vocabulary List (page 10)
2. Public Service Announcement video (page 12)
3. "Discussion Starter" questions, as deemed appropriate by the teacher (page 7 - 8)
4. Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Background and Key Provisions of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (page 4)
5. Reasons for Abandonment: Why Do Parents Abandon their Children? (page 13)

#### Activities:

- As teacher deems appropriate, utilize "Discussion Starters" to introduce the topic
- Show Public Service Announcement about Illinois' Safe Haven Law
- Read "Reasons for Abandonment: Why Do Parents Abandon Their Children?"
- Read "Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Background and Key Provisions of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act."
- Discuss the video and reading materials. Questions could include:
  - What are your initial thoughts about infant abandonment?
  - Why do you think someone would consider abandoning their infant?
  - What did you learn about the reasons for this law?
  - What are your general thoughts about the law as a solution?
  - What else do you want to know about the law and/or these types of situations?  
(mark these answers down for further follow up)

## VOCABULARY

### The following words are defined as they relate to the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (Safe Haven Law)

**Abandon** – To leave an infant alone without protection, support or help. To abandon an infant is illegal. Relinquishing an infant under the Safe Haven Law is legal.

**Adopt** – To legally take someone else’s child and bring up as one’s own. Adoption is done through the courts.

**Adoption agency** – A private agency that provides adoption services, that is, helps arrange for a child to be adopted. (See child-placing agency.)

**Adoptive parent(s)** – The person or persons who legally adopt a child

**Adoption plan** – A plan for placing a child for adoption. The plan is made in advance by the biological parent(s) and an adoption agency, and, sometimes, the person or persons who will be adopting the child.

**Alternative** – Another way to do something, such as relinquishing an infant under the Safe Haven Law (legal) is an alternative to abandoning the infant (illegal).

**Biological parent(s)** – The birth father and mother

**Child-placing agency** – A licensed public or private agency that receives a child for the purpose of placing or arranging for the placement of the child in a foster family home or other facility for child care, apart from the custody of the child's parents.

**Confidential adoption** – An adoption that takes place without the child or the adoptive parents knowing the identity of the biological, birth parent(s).

**DCFS** – Department of Children and Family Services. An Illinois government agency that oversees the safety of at-risk children in their own homes and placement of children whose parents are not able or willing to care for them, either for a limited time or permanently.

**Foster care** – A person who provides foster care takes care of a child who is “placed” with them by DCFS, without necessarily intending to adopt the child. Foster care is often temporary, and may last until the child can be returned home or placed in an adoptive home.

**Illegal** – Not legal; not lawful. Abandoning a baby is illegal.

**Immunity** – Freedom from prosecution. A parent who relinquishes an infant under the Safe Haven Law will have immunity from prosecution.

**Legal** – Lawful; following the law. Relinquishing an infant in accordance with the Safe Haven Law is legal.

**Legal custody** – The relationship created by a court order in the best interest of a newborn infant that imposes on the infant's custodian the responsibility of physical possession of the infant, the duty to protect, train, and discipline the infant, and the duty to provide the infant with food, shelter, education, and medical care, except as these are limited by parental rights and responsibilities.

**Maternity/paternity testing** – DNA tests that a woman or a man can take, that will prove if they are the mother or father of a child.

**Pre-adoptive home** – The home of the person or persons who plan to adopt the child, as soon as the adoption process is complete. Infants who are relinquished under the Safe Haven Law go directly to a pre-adoptive home, and not to temporary foster care.

**Prosecute** – To carry on proceedings in court against someone, in order to seek punishment for a crime. Anyone who abandons a baby commits a crime and may be prosecuted. *However*, the Safe Haven Law allows a person to hand an unharmed infant to a worker at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire station, police station, or campus police, and the person will *not* be prosecuted.

**Putative father** – A man who may be the father of a child.

**Putative Father Registry** – A program that allows a putative father to register his name, saying that he may be the father of an infant born to a particular woman. Before placing an infant for adoption, an adoption agency must check the Putative Father Registry, to try to find out if there is a putative father who is interested in participating in the child's adoption or in parenting the child. Certain DNA tests may be done to prove paternity.

**Relinquish** – To let go of; release to someone else. A parent may relinquish their infant to a person working at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire station, police station.

**Rotating basis** – Taking turns, one after the other. DCFS works with licensed adoption agencies on a rotating basis.

**Safe Haven Law** – the common name for the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act.

## LINK TO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Public Service Announcement (PSA) is available as a 30, 60, or 80 second video, in a variety of media formats. It was made possible through the creativity and generosity of director Joe Lyons and producer Pat Fischer. Much gratitude also goes to the family of a “Safe Haven” child who was relinquished under the Illinois Safe Haven Law.

The PSA is available under the Resource Tab at [www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org) or on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtJ96OrOZi0&feature=shareSaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtJ96OrOZi0&feature=shareSaveAbandonedBabies.org)

## REASONS FOR ABANDONMENT

### Why do parents abandon their children?

- Pregnant woman/girl is afraid her parents or family members will react violently if they learn she is pregnant
- Pregnant woman/girl is afraid her boyfriend will abandon her if he finds out she is pregnant
- Father does not want anyone to know his girlfriend has gotten pregnant
- Pregnant woman/girl denies pregnancy or does not know she is pregnant, so she is mentally and emotionally unprepared to have a child
- Pregnant woman's husband or boyfriend is not the father
- Woman/girl fears she doesn't have enough money to care for the infant
- Pregnant woman/girl is afraid or ashamed to tell her parents or others who could help
- Pregnant woman/girl lives with an abuser and is afraid for herself and the baby if the pregnancy/newborn is discovered
- Pregnant woman/girl is afraid of the humiliation of having a baby without being married
- Infant is the result of rape or incest
- Pregnant woman/girl fears retribution due to religious or cultural beliefs
- Woman fears social services will take away her other children
- Woman fears an ex-spouse will take her other children
- Woman is afraid she will not be able to finish school and have the career she hopes to have

A person who has experienced any of these circumstances may be under severe emotional distress. He/she may be afraid and feel as though he/she has nowhere to turn for help. In some of these cases, people have unsafely abandoned their newborns. The Safe Haven Law offers a safe, legal alternative for anyone who is unable to care for a newborn.

## Lesson #2: THE LAW AS A SOLUTION

### Objectives: Students will:

- List the most important provisions of the law
- Explain the difference between abandonment and relinquishment under the law
- Articulate other safe alternatives to relinquishing an infant under the Safe Haven Law
- Identify available resources for help in situations where there is danger of abandonment

### Materials:

1. Illinois' Safe Haven Law: Questions and Answers (pages 15-17)
2. List of Resources (page 18)
3. "What Would *You Do?*" Situations (page 19)

### Activities:

- Read and review reading materials, asking if students have questions.
- Read together and discuss one or more of the "Situations" provided. Ask students to imagine that they are a friend to the distressed parents in each situation.
- Ask how a person might convince a distressed friend to safely relinquish their newborn under the Safe Haven Law.
- As an option, students may role play for the class or create a video depicting the discussion between a desperate parent and a friend, for later response by the entire class.

### Some things to consider when discussing each role:

#### ***Encouraging Friend:***

- What were the key facts you used to try to convince the parent to safely relinquish the newborn?
- How did you overcome any fears or objections voiced by the parent?
- Was your argument to the parent mainly emotional or rational? Why?

#### **Distressed Parent:**

- Why is the parent afraid?
- What assurances does the parent need?
- What are the parent's long-term and short-term needs?
- Why can't you solve the parent's problem?

### Assessment:

Students answer the above questions orally or in writing, or produce a skit and/or video that demonstrates their understanding of the key issues.

## ILLINOIS' SAFE HAVEN LAW: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Why does Illinois have a Safe Haven Law?**

Before 2001, Illinois did not have a "Safe Haven Law" allowing for the legal and anonymous relinquishment of a newborn child to a safe environment. From 1997 to 1999, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) estimates that between 32 - 34 infants were unsafely abandoned each year, 20 of which were left within the first 24 hours of life.

The Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act was passed in 2001 to significantly reduce the incidence of unsafe abandonment and death by offering desperate parents, many of whom are under severe emotional distress, the option of safely relinquishing their newborn child to a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire station or police station without fear of prosecution.

### **What happens once a newborn is safely in the hands of authorities?**

DCFS is notified of the relinquishment and, if not already at a medical facility, the infant is taken to the nearest hospital to receive medical care. DCFS then appoints a licensed adoption agency to arrange for placement of the infant with an adoptive family.

### **What about the baby's medical history?**

The relinquishing parent may anonymously and voluntarily provide medical information at any time. At the time of relinquishment, the parent is given an *Information Packet* that includes an optional section asking for basic background information about the child, including medical history. If the parent chooses to complete this form, it may be given to the authorities at the time of relinquishment or it may be anonymously mailed to DCFS at a later date.

### **What happens if the newborn is over 30 days old?**

The law defines a newborn infant as "a child who a licensed physician reasonably believes is 30 days old or less" at the time of relinquishment (325 ILCS 2/10). All existing laws and procedures related to child abandonment remain in effect for children over 30 days old.

### **What happens if there is evidence of abuse or neglect?**

If child abuse or neglect is suspected, the Act's protections do not apply. All existing laws and procedures related to cases of child abuse and neglect remain in effect.

### **Who pays for the medical cost of the newborn?**

Relinquished newborns are entitled to Medicaid, and hospitals will be reimbursed for any care provided to the child by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

### **Can parents change their minds after relinquishing their newborn?**

Yes, parents have 60 days from the date of relinquishment to reclaim the infant by filing a petition in the circuit court. If a petition to return custody is filed, the court will order maternity/paternity testing and DCFS will conduct a child protective investigation and home study. If a petition is not filed within 60 days, DCFS or the adoption agency will initiate proceedings to terminate parental rights and to obtain an adoption order. Once the adoption order is entered, all rights of the relinquishing parent are terminated.



**What about father's rights?**

The Act makes no changes to existing Illinois laws governing fathers' rights. DCFS or the adoption agency must search Illinois' Putative Father Registry prior to filing a petition to terminate parental rights. A search must be conducted 30 days after the relinquished newborn's estimated date of birth. If a potential putative father is identified, he will be provided with notice of the relinquishment and information about termination of parental rights.

**How do you know if the person relinquishing the newborn is actually the parent?**

DCFS will notify law enforcement of the relinquishment within 24 hours. Law enforcement will then verify that the newborn is not a missing or kidnapped child before placement with an adoption agency.

**Does the Safe Haven Law encourage abandonment and irresponsible behavior?**

No. The law is designed not to encourage but to prevent abandonment, and possible death, by providing parents with a safe alternative. The Act recognizes that establishing an adoption plan is preferable to relinquishment, and requires relinquishing parents be given information on adoption options, as well as grief and pregnancy counseling.

**How does the legislation prevent one adoption agency from getting all infants relinquished under the law?**

DCFS maintains a list of licensed adoption agencies that have agreed to work with the Safe Haven program and to take legal custody of a relinquished newborn to place the child in an adoptive home. DCFS contacts these agencies on a rotating basis.

**Why do state and public departments need to be involved since there are many private groups working in this area?**

Under Illinois law, DCFS is responsible for issues involving child welfare and possible criminal conduct (including abandonment, which is illegal).

**Do other states have similar legislation?**

Yes, all 50 states have enacted Safe Haven Laws to protect newborn infants; however, the specific provisions of the laws vary by state.

**Who tracks the number of abandoned infants left at Safe Havens?**

DCFS must submit an annual report to the Illinois General Assembly on the prevention of injury or death of newborn infants and placement of relinquished infants under the Act. The Save Abandoned Babies Foundation also works with DCFS to maintain this information.

**Is the Safe Haven Law the only answer?**

No, there are other alternatives to using the Safe Haven Law. These include keeping and raising the child, or participating in making an adoption plan.

**Keep the baby.**

If a parent wants to keep the newborn, but thinks they cannot afford to care for the infant, public assistance and food stamps may help. If a woman is afraid of abuse, the National Domestic Violence Hotline can help her. If a young girl is afraid of her parents, she can contact the Family Services Agency in her county or community for help and counseling. The health of the mother and the baby will both be protected if the mother receives medical care before the baby is born. Page 18 lists several resources that can help.

**Get prenatal care and give birth in a hospital.**

The Safe Haven Law was established to give desperate parents an alternative to abandoning an infant to injury or death, and thereby facing prosecution and punishment for a crime. The Safe Haven Law does not apply to births that happen in a hospital. After thinking it through, and perhaps discussing her fears with others, such as a good friend, teacher, nurse, or social worker, even a frightened woman may choose to receive help in getting prenatal care and giving birth in a hospital. The new mother will not have to take her baby home, but can give the baby up for adoption right after birth.

If she chooses to do so, she will no longer be keeping her pregnancy a secret. She will give her name and insurance information to the clinic where she receives prenatal care for herself and her unborn baby, and to the hospital where she will give birth. This early care will give her baby the best possible start in life. The social workers in the hospital can also help the new mother to participate in an adoption plan, if she so chooses. She can provide information on her family's medical history, and the father's, if possible. Having this information will be extremely helpful to the adoptive parents.

**Make an adoption plan.**

The Safe Haven Law recognizes that establishing an adoption plan is preferable to relinquishment, and requires relinquishing parents be given information on adoption options, as well as grief and pregnancy counseling. This *Information Packet* is offered to a relinquishing parent. So, even if a parent has relinquished their infant by bringing him or her to a worker at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire or police station, the parent can still participate in an adoption plan for the infant. They would need to contact DCFS, to learn how to go about participating in an adoption plan for their infant. An adoption plan allows a parent who has decided to place their infant for adoption to decide if, and to what extent, the parent wishes to be involved in the life of the child after the baby is adopted. Parents have several options, including the option of remaining anonymous. To learn more about adoption in Illinois, visit the website of the Illinois Adoption Registry.

## RESOURCES TO CONTACT FOR HELP

You may know of someone who is pregnant and worried. If your friend is unwilling to talk directly to her parents, encourage her to talk to someone who knows about the services and resources available in your community and someone who will be helpful and supportive. School counselors, social workers, nurses, and teachers can help.

Here are some other resources that can help.

### **Child Help USA (Abuse Hotline)**

1-800-422-4453

### **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Hotline**

1-800-252-2873

### **Illinois Adoption Registry**

1-877-323-5299

### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE

### **National Safe Haven Alliance (Toll-free)**

1-888-510-2229

[www.NationalSafeHavenAlliance.org](http://www.NationalSafeHavenAlliance.org)

### **Save Abandoned Babies Foundation**

1-312-440-0229 (9am-5pm Monday-Friday)

[www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org),

[Info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org](mailto:Info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org)

### **Public Assistance and Food Stamps**

For more information, contact your local county welfare department

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO? SITUATIONS

### Using Your Powers of Persuasion

In this activity, your goal is to convince a fearful teenager to safely relinquish an unplanned or unwanted newborn using the Safe Haven Law rather than unsafely abandon the infant. Review the Safe Haven Law Q&A Handout to learn the facts you need to make a compelling argument.

### Activity Options:

1. React to one or more of the **Situations** as if you were the trusted friend.
2. React to one or more of the **Situations** as if you were the desperate parent. You may state or write the arguments you would use, and what the other person might say,
3. Work out a short skit with a partner that shows the encounter.
4. Consider making a video about the Safe Haven Law.

When you've completed this exercise, discuss the key points raised by the fearful girl and the friend's response. Discuss the different possible outcomes and who the girl could turn to for additional help.

### SITUATIONS

- Julia is terrified her parents will react violently if they learn she is pregnant. Her father always warned her that there would be a high price to pay if she ever came home pregnant before she was married. So far, she's been able to hide her pregnancy, but the time to have this baby is coming fast. Julia can't let her parents know about this situation. She feels she has nowhere to turn...
- Jess is afraid her boyfriend will abandon her if he finds out she is pregnant. Her friends are getting ready to attend prom, and here she is, just wanting to turn back the clock on this awful situation – she is not ready to have a baby, or to lose the love of her life! She doesn't know what to do...
- Linda's boyfriend Noah has just learned that another friend of his believes that Linda may be hiding a pregnancy. He doesn't want to believe it! Their parents will be so upset and what will happen to his life?! He's not ready to be a father, but what choice does he have...
- Candace has just been accepted to the University and does NOT want to give up a chance to succeed in college and have the career she's always imagined. Yet, she does not want to hurt this baby either. What can she do? She has no good ideas...

## Lesson #3: The BIG PICTURE - CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT THE LAW

### Objectives: Students will:

- Articulate values of personal and societal responsibility that relate to protection of vulnerable populations
- Discuss pros and cons of alternatives to relinquishment, and situations to which these alternatives may apply.

### Materials:

1. "Safe Haven Baby, now 10 And Thriving, Retraces Her First Steps"  
[Saveabandonedbabies.org/2017/10/04/safe-haven-baby-now-10-and-thriving-retraces-her-first-steps/](http://Saveabandonedbabies.org/2017/10/04/safe-haven-baby-now-10-and-thriving-retraces-her-first-steps/)
2. "Forever Bound by 'Shoebox Baby' Mom and Nurse Reconnect Twelve Years Later" [www.chicagotribune.com/news/media/94751118-132.html](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/media/94751118-132.html)
3. Comparing Scenarios of Safe Relinquishment vs. Abandonment (page 21)

### Activities:

- Read/watch video "Safe Haven Baby, now 10 And Thriving, Retraces He First Steps"  
[Saveabandonedbabies.org/2017/10/04/safe-haven-baby-now-10-and-thriving-retraces-her-first-steps/](http://Saveabandonedbabies.org/2017/10/04/safe-haven-baby-now-10-and-thriving-retraces-her-first-steps/) Video can be accessed directly here:  
<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2017/10/04/safe-haven-success-story/>
- Read/watch video "'Forever Bound by 'Shoebox Baby' Mom and Nurse Reconnect Twelve Years Later" [www.chicagotribune.com/news/media/94751118-132.html](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/media/94751118-132.html)
- Read "Comparing Scenarios of Safe Relinquishment vs. Abandonment"
- Consider the following questions. Make brief notes about your answers to these questions and prepare to share your ideas during a class. Take a few minutes to think about why the Safe Haven Law is a good idea for Illinois. Here are some questions:
  - Who has responsibility for a newborn infant? The parents? Society in general?
  - How does the Safe Haven Law help an unplanned newborn?
  - How does it help the newborn's parents?
  - Does this law also help other people? If so, who are they and how do they benefit?
  - Can you think of any negative things about this law? If so, what are they?
  - Are there ways to make the law better? How?
  - Is the Safe Haven Law the only answer, or are there additional alternatives to abandonment?
  - What are some positive aspects to alternatives such as the following?
    - Telling a family member or friend and not attempting to conceal your pregnancy
    - Giving your name and delivering your baby in a hospital rather than a non-hospital setting
    - Participating in an adoption plan

# COMPARING SCENARIOS OF SAFE RELINQUISHMENT/ABANDONMENT

Read the following four scenarios and compare them. Think about:

- The decisions and choices that were made
- How the infant was left
- The ultimate result

## SCENARIO #1

In early March 2006, a young woman brought a healthy newborn baby to a regional medical center under the provisions of the Illinois' Safe Haven Law. A few hours earlier, the young woman had called the hospital and said, "I want to relinquish my baby under the Safe Haven Law." This parent and newborn are protected under Illinois' Safe Haven Law. As the Law states, the baby's mother did not have to identify herself. When the baby was brought to the emergency room, he was examined by a pediatrician and was healthy and doing fine. He was placed in a pre-adoptive home while the adoption process was started. The mother was offered an *Information Packet* and a medical/family history form she could voluntarily complete and send back anonymously. She left the hospital.

## SCENARIO #2

Police were trying to find the parent of a newborn infant found by a garbage can. The fully clothed baby, estimated to be two to three hours old, was found wrapped in a blanket. A neighbor heard the baby crying and found her wedged between the handle of the garbage can and a wall. The baby was taken to an area hospital. A nursing supervisor at the hospital said the baby was in good condition. Police talked to neighbors and followed up on any tips that came in, as they attempted to find the baby's parents.

## SCENARIO #3

Dressed in a tiny tee shirt that read "My First Halloween," a newborn baby was brought to a suburban fire station where he was safely relinquished by his mother under the provision of Illinois' Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act, also known as the Safe Haven Law. The mother brought her healthy baby boy, along with formula and extra diapers, to a staffed fire station. He was transported to a local hospital for a check-up and was placed in a pre-adoptive home. The mother was offered an *Information Packet*, including a medical history for the baby she could complete and return anonymously. She left the fire station with no questions asked and no fear of prosecution.

## SCENARIO #4

The custodian of a church was making certain everything was in order for the many services and activities planned for Christmas week when he found something quite unexpected. As he opened the door of a seldom used reception hall, he thought he heard kittens meowing. As he investigated the soft noises, he was surprised to find newborn twins, wrapped in blankets and tucked into a large box next to the radiator in the hall. The custodian, still amazed by his discovery, said the babies must have recently been placed there as they were warm, their diapers dry, and they seemed to have been fed. The police were called, and the babies

transported to an area hospital. Local authorities attempted to locate the parents of the babies and asked area residents for assistance. These twin babies had much to be thankful for. The hall in which they were left is not ordinarily heated or used. It could have been many days before the babies were found. Churches are not considered Safe Havens under the law as they are not open 24/7 and staff is not readily available to accept a newborn. These twins were not safely relinquished as defined by the Safe Haven Law, but fortunately, found alive. The parents were sought out for unsafe abandonment and the babies placed in the foster care system.

## OPTIONS FOR ASSESSING STUDENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW

1. Ask each student to write a paragraph explaining what they learned about the Safe Haven Law. The following ten-point rubric can be used:

<b>Requirements</b> (possible points)	<b>Points Received</b>
Introductory sentence (2 points)	
At least four facts about the Safe Haven Law (4 points)	
Concluding sentence (2 points)	
Overall clarity (2 points)	
<b>TOTAL</b> (10 points)	

2. Assess student participation in one of the “Additional Projects” according to their understanding and mastery of following key points:
  - Understanding of four or more facts about the Safe Haven Law
  - Cooperation with other team members
  - Accuracy and clarity of the messages displayed through art, poetry, the awareness campaign or other projects



## EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES: OPTIONS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING

While the topics in this unit correlate naturally with Health Education, the Safe Haven Law can be related to several subject areas. Try the following ideas to make these curriculum connections:

**Fine Arts & Language Arts:** Your students may be inspired to create posters, artwork, poems and music that depict themes and emotions related to the goals and successes of the Safe Haven Law. See related activities on the Additional Projects Sheet (page 25).

**Social Studies, Citizenship and Law:** Use the Safe Haven Law to introduce a discussion of the purpose and practice of state law generally. See related activities on the Additional Projects Sheet (page 25).

**Life Skills:** Encourage students to think about how the Safe Haven Law may affect a teen who gives up an infant under this law. See related activities on the Additional Projects Sheet (page 25).

**Mathematics:** Practice statistics skills using national estimates found while researching abandoned babies. See related activity on the Additional Projects Sheet (page 25).

## **SAVING LIVES - SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH ADDITIONAL PROJECTS**

**Consider the following projects:**

### **I. DESIGN AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Working with a group of classmates, design an awareness campaign that will publicize the existence of Illinois' Safe Haven Law.

- Consider the following questions:
  - Who is the primary audience for the message? What types of media would you use to reach your audience?
  - What are the essential elements of the message you are trying to convey? What would be the annual advertising budget for the Safe Haven awareness campaign?
- Consider the following options:
  - Design a bulletin board for your classroom or hallway to inform other students about the “No Shame, No Blame, No Names” Safe Haven Law to safely relinquish an unharmed newborn.
  - Use this topic as a school service project. Contact your local police, fire station and hospital to make sure they are aware of the law. Discuss ways to bring awareness to your community.
  - Posters, bumper stickers, billboards, radio ads, TV spots, etc.
  - Create a slogan, choose music and write a song with a clear message.
  - Create a PowerPoint presentation.
  - Create a video.
  - Create messages for social media.
- When your work is complete, work with your group to present your campaign effectively to the rest of the class, or your entire school.
- Use key excerpts from the Safe Haven Law resources in student bulletins, daily announcements, public service announcements on student radio and television stations and on your school’s website.
- Organize an informal “brown bag lunch” discussion for students who wish to talk further about the Safe Haven Law together.
- Involve students’ parents by inviting students to take the Safe Haven Law handouts home to share with their families.
- Inform teachers, librarians, counselors, coaches and others who work with young people about the Safe Haven Law and this curriculum.
- Make Safe Haven Law materials available in the student services’ and nurse’s offices.

## II. UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT TOOK TO CREATE THE LAW

Citizens and lawmakers in Illinois wanted to assure the safety of newborns from being unsafely abandoned. This is the idea that led to the Safe Haven Law in Illinois enacted in 2001. **What did it take to turn a good idea into a law in our state?** These ideas may help answer this question:

- How are laws introduced and passed in Illinois?
- Contact the office of your local state representative(s) for information or materials.
- Present your findings by writing a step-by-step list of the law-making process that clearly illustrates this process.
- Be sure to include any interesting facts you find about how the Safe Haven Law was enacted and amended in the years since the Law's passage.

## III. EXPRESSING YOUR FEELINGS

You may experience many emotions as you learn about the challenges and successes of the Safe Haven Law. An unplanned pregnancy and giving up a newborn are likely to cause anxiety, loneliness and sadness. On the other hand, a newborn safely placed with a loving new family is an occasion for celebration, hope and happy anticipation.

- Use your talents to express an emotion you feel (happy, sad, angry or other) about the Safe Haven Law.
- Draw a picture, compose a song, write a poem to an infant safely relinquished under the Safe Haven Law, or simply write your thoughts down in your personal journal. If you wish, share what you create with your classmates.

## IV. FIGURING IT OUT

Conduct a survey of students in other classes to determine their awareness of the Safe Haven Law. Determine the percentage of students who know that the law exists and ask follow up questions to assess the accuracy of the information students have about the law. Use your survey results to prepare a report on student knowledge of the law.

## V. FINDING MORE PROJECT IDEAS

Check out more project ideas at the “How You Can Help” section of the Save Abandoned Babies website:

[saveabandonedbabies.org/how-you-can-save-lives/](http://saveabandonedbabies.org/how-you-can-save-lives/)