

## IOWA'S SAFE HAVEN LAW



### **WHAT IS THE LAW?**

The Safe Haven Act is a law that allows parents – or another person who has the parent’s authorization – to leave an infant up to 14 days old at a hospital or health care facility without fear of prosecution for abandonment. The child must be unharmed, with no signs of abuse.

### **WHY IS THERE A LAW LIKE THIS?**

In the past, parents who abandoned their babies could face criminal charges of abandonment of child endangerment. The purpose of the Safe Haven Act is to encourage the dropping off of newborns in a safe place. It also provides a place for parents to bring their babies if they find themselves confused and unsure of what to do. By bringing their babies to a safe haven, they will be safe and placed with a family who will love and care for them.

**Since its enactment in 2001, the Safe Haven law has been used TWENTY-NINE times. Most hospitals in Iowa and the U.S. are Safe Havens.**

### **WHERE ARE THE SAFE HAVEN LOCATIONS IN THE WATERLOO/CEDAR FALLS AREA?**

- Allen Memorial Hospital
- Covenant Medical Center
- Sartori Memorial Hospital

### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN INFANT IS LEFT AT A SAFE HAVEN?**

For safety, newborns should be handed to a staff person inside the Safe Haven. This way, staff can immediately begin to care for the infant. If hospital staff sees the person leaving the infant, they may ask a few questions. No questions have to be answered. It is helpful to have the infant’s medical history and the parent’s medical history. All information is kept confidential. The Department of Human Services will take custody of the infant. A court hearing must be held to terminate the parent’s rights. When the parent cannot be reached, the date and time of the court hearing will be published in the newspaper. No names are involved. The parent does not need to go to the public hearing unless they want to. After legal termination of the parent’s rights, the baby is placed with an adoptive family. All information is kept confidential.

**For more information on the Safe Haven law contact  
Together for Youth (319)235-5088 ext 2 or 3**