



# **Safe Haven Law Annual Report January 2017**

**Pursuant to HCR 107  
of the 2016 Regular Session of  
the Louisiana Legislature**

**and**

**Act 223  
of the 2015 Regular Session of  
the Louisiana Legislature**

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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. That Code again was amended in 2003. The entire Safe Haven Law is contained in LA Children's Code Chapter 13, Articles 1149-1160.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS

DCFS (then the Department of Social Services) implemented policies and procedures in 2004 relating to the state's Safe Haven law. Since 2004, 50 infants have been successfully and safely relinquished to the state. The chart below provides details on the 50 successful relinquishments.

Number of Safe Haven Cases CY 2004 - 2016														
Region	Calendar Year													Total
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Greater New Orleans	0	2	0	1	1	1	3	0	2	5	0	1	4	<b>20</b>
Baton Rouge	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	<b>8</b>
Covington	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>7</b>
Thibodaux	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Lafayette	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	<b>8</b>
Lake Charles	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	<b>4</b>
Alexandria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Shreveport	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50</b>

Safe Haven Cases from 2013-2016 by Receiving Emergency Designated Facility Type					
Region	Calendar Year				Total
	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Licensed Hospitals upon birth of child	7	2	3	4	<b>16</b>
Other Licensed Hospitals	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
Fire Stations	1	0	2	1	<b>4</b>
Emergency Medical Service Providers (911)	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
Child Advocacy Centers	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Medical Clinics	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Public Health Units	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Police Stations	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Crisis Pregnancy Centers	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>

## **3.0 SAFE HAVEN PUBLIC AWARENESS**

### **PUBLIC AWARENESS OVERVIEW**

Louisiana’s Safe Haven law provides a safe, legal, last resort to abandonment.

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (then the Department of Social Services) implemented policies and procedures in 2004 relating to the state's Safe Haven law. Several pieces of legislation have been passed since the implementation of the Safe Haven Law, all encouraged to promote the use of the Safe Haven Law as an alternative to abandonment of an infant.

Since 2004, 50 infants have been successfully and safely relinquished to the State\* through a “designated emergency care facility”. These facilities include Licensed Hospitals, Public Health Units, Emergency Medical Service Providers, Medical Clinics, Fire Stations, Police Stations, Pregnancy Crisis Centers, and Child Advocacy Centers.

*\* Number as of January 1, 2017*

### **ACTIVITIES TO DATE**

In February 2009, DCFS launched a statewide public awareness campaign for Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law. The campaign featured billboards, brochures, Public Service Announcements for radio and television, and the creation of a website ([www.louisianasafehaven.com](http://www.louisianasafehaven.com)). The Department also designed posters, business cards, and window decals for safe haven facilities. In July 2009, an online form was created for Safe Haven facilities to request materials for their Safe Haven site. Since then, more than 250 requests for materials have been submitted.

Since 2009, DCFS has appeared in radio, television, and newspaper stories bringing awareness to Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law as an alternative to abandonment. The Department also periodically issued news releases about relinquishments and updates to the Safe Haven Law.

In 2013, when the relinquishment age was changed to 60 days old, redesigned brochures and posters were printed. Updated packets of posters, brochures, cards and decals were then mailed to Louisiana Safe Haven facilities.

In 2016, DCFS distributed at least 42 packets – each of which included posters, decals, brochures and cards – requested by 42 Safe Haven facilities.

Information regarding the Safe Haven law was posted to the Department Twitter ([www.twitter.com/LouisianaDCFS](https://www.twitter.com/LouisianaDCFS)) and Facebook pages ([www.facebook.com/LADCFS](https://www.facebook.com/LADCFS)). The Facebook posts reached more than 33,000 and Twitter reached more than 4,500 in 2016.

The Louisiana Safe Haven website was visited nearly 7,000 times with visiting peaks on January 14, May 24 and 25, August 23 and December 24 through 27.

In May 2016, a newborn was relinquished under the Louisiana Safe Haven law at a Baton Rouge area fire station. The Department used this opportunity to inform the public about the law through a news release, social media posts and various media outlet interviews (print, radio and television).

In late December 2016, the Greater Baton Rouge area experienced a high profile abandonment of a newborn child left in a Walmart trash can. This case provided an opportunity to talk about Safe Haven law as an alternative option to abandonment. Secretary Marketa Garner Walters conducted multiple interviews on the topic which received national attention.

In December 2016 alone, news stories on the topic of Louisiana's Safe Haven law as an alternative to abandonment reached more than 5.7 million people around the country. The Time's Picayune had the largest local reach with 2 million people.

## **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

### **Objective**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) aims to increase public awareness of the Louisiana Safe Haven law through the implementation of an annual communications plan. The purpose of this communications plan is to bolster our efforts to educate the community, educational institutions of medicine, nursing, law enforcement, firefighting, or other institutions where professionals are training to work in a Safe Haven facility or be involved with Safe Haven relinquishments, and other community organizations that would benefit from Safe Haven information in order to raise awareness of Louisiana's Safe Haven Law.

### **Target Audiences**

DCFS Staff – The DCFS Team serves on the front line with our other audiences. Currently, there are approximately 3,400 staff working within the Department.

General Public – The public includes clients of DCFS – individuals receiving a variety of services from the agency. Each month, DCFS touches close to a quarter of Louisiana's citizens through the public services offered.

Stakeholders – DCFS stakeholders include the Administration, state legislature, state partner agencies, educational institutions of medicine and nursing schools, law enforcement, firefighting, or other institutions where professionals are training to work in a Safe Haven site, and other community organizations that would benefit from Safe Haven information.

Safe Haven Relinquishment Sites – This includes licensed hospitals, public health units, emergency medical service providers, medical clinics, fire stations, police stations, pregnancy crisis centers and child advocacy centers.

## **Strategies**

### Partnerships

- Work in collaboration with established community partnerships to increase public awareness for the Safe Haven Law, including providing informational materials to these organizations. For example, DCFS will continue its partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana (PCAL) by utilizing and promoting the 1-800-CHILDREN hotline as the main phone number to call for Louisiana Safe Haven information.
- Continue working with Safe Haven relinquishment sites – licensed hospitals, public health units, emergency medical service providers, medical clinics, fire stations, police stations, pregnancy crisis centers and child advocacy centers – to provide informational materials as requested.
- Identify new community organizations for potential partnerships with the help of its stakeholders. Targeted organizations would be those whose clients would benefit from additional information on the Safe Haven Laws.
- Work with the Louisiana Child Welfare Training Academy to update the training video utilized by Safe Haven sites to reflect both increase in age for the law and the Department’s name change.
- Mailout to all Safe Haven sites to inform them of their placement on the Safe Haven registry along with their responsibilities with such designation.

### Media Relations

- Disseminate quarterly news releases, letters to the editor, or editorials to media outlets across the state each calendar year. Potential topics to touch on include general information on the Safe Haven Law, information regarding children surrendered through the safe a child recently brought to a Safe Haven site and FAQs about the Safe Haven Law.
- Make appearances on morning show(s) (radio or TV) to speak about Louisiana’s Safe Haven Law.
- Respond to any inquiries received regarding the Safe Haven law in a timely manner - both from the media and the public.



## Social Media

- Create new monthly stories and tweets for posting to the Department social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). Social Media posts will be monitored through analytics for audience reach.
- Each news release or published editorial will be posted the DCFS Facebook page for additional coverage.
- Create a cover photo image for the Department Twitter and Facebook pages specific to Louisiana's Safe Haven Law. This cover photo should be designated as the page's banner for a minimum length of one month.

## Program Materials

- Current print Safe Haven materials will be reviewed yearly for any necessary changes or editing and reordered as the need arises and as funding becomes available. Printed materials include brochures, posters, business cards and site window decals.
- Safe Haven facilities and DCFS stakeholders can request printed materials through an online form published to the DCFS website. Safe Haven facilities are able to request posters, brochures, decals and business cards. DCFS stakeholders that are not a designated Safe Haven facility should only request posters or brochures as the business cards are given after a relinquishment and window decals designate Safe Haven sites.
- Other materials that should be updated when funding is available include the online training video and Safe Haven commercial PSAs. These will be disseminated to media outlets and stakeholders for use once they have been updated.
- If funding is available, advertisements – such as billboards, bus advertisements, newspaper ads, and social media ads – should be considered as a way to reach additional members of target audiences.

## Website

- Build a searchable database for LouisianaSafeHaven.com that can be used by those needing to locate a Safe Haven site near them. The database will use Google Maps in order to pinpoint a person's location and provide them with a list of facilities nearby.
- A letter will be sent to facilities to verify that their address information is correct and to provide additional address information for sites we are unable to find information on (i.e. individual fire station addresses).

## **Monitoring Outcomes**

To understand the number of target audience members reached, DCFS will track the number of media reporters and outlets who received any Safe Haven news releases or editorials. DCFS will also track the number of subsequent stories produced based on news release or editorial and their readership/viewership/listener numbers to have a better understanding of their reach.

DCFS will monitor its social media sites' analytics to leverage reach and engagement (likes, shares, retweets, etc.) numbers.

DCFS will also use its website analytics to track the number of people who visit [www.louisianasafehaven.com](http://www.louisianasafehaven.com) each month and monitor if there is an increase in visitors during media opportunities.

Requests for printed materials will be monitored and tracked for future print orders. Inquiries from legislators and other stakeholders in regards to the Safe Haven law will also be tracked.

## **4.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF 2016 LEGISLATION**

### **4.1 ACT 84**

Act 84, sponsored by multiple Representatives and Senators, required promulgation of the image constituting the official Safe Haven symbol as described in Article 1161 of Act 84, and required DCFS to transmit an electronic version of the Safe Haven symbol to any designated emergency care facility upon request. Rulemaking has been initiated by DCFS to incorporate the description of the functional Safe Haven symbol. The ability to request the Safe Haven symbol to be electronically submitted has been placed on the DCFS internet site.

### **4.2 ACT 80**

Act 80, sponsored by Representatives Willmott and Lebas, requires each city, parish or local school board to provide high school age and grade appropriate classroom instruction related to the Safe Haven laws, and changes the term "Pregnancy Crisis Centers" as a designated Safe Haven facility to "Crisis Pregnancy Centers. The Louisiana Department of Education, through Bulletin 741, requires all local educational authorities to provide Safe Haven education to the required population. Educational information is available on the DCFS Internet site.

### **4.3 HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 107**

House Concurrent Resolution 107, sponsored by Representatives Willmott and Glover includes multiple provisions to improve best practice around the Safe Haven law. Through HCR 107, a Safe Haven Consortium was developed that includes a select group of representatives of emergency care facilities and key stakeholder groups. Approximately twenty associations/entities were to appoint a



representative to the Consortium and the first meeting of the Consortium was to be held prior to December 1, 2016, and at least annually thereafter. Furthermore, the Consortium is required to submit a report of its activities and findings for inclusion in this Annual report. Finally, HCR 107 requests DCFS, with the assistance of the Consortium, to develop and maintain a registry of designated emergency care facilities.

DCFS coordinated and hosted the first Safe Haven Consortium meeting on November 30, 2016. Included in Section 5.0 of this report is a summary of the Consortium's activities and recommendations.

DCFS secured a small grant through the Children's Trust Fund to publish a registry of Safe Haven designated emergency care facilities. Data is being collected from the Safe Haven Consortium members and other stakeholders to compile the registry. Challenges have been encountered in collecting this data, given the broad array of types of emergency care facilities listed in law, and their ability to serve as 24 hour Safe Haven facilities. Currently, the law states that a designated emergency care facility means any medical clinic, any hospital licensed in Louisiana, any fire station, any police station, any public health unit, any emergency medical service provider, any crisis pregnancy center, or any child advocacy center. For the purpose of this registry, DCFS, with assistance from the Consortium, facilities listed will include:

- Medical Clinics – those clinics designated as Federally Qualified Health Centers (33);
- Licensed Hospitals – all hospitals licensed by the Louisiana Department of Health, including 92 acute care hospitals, 27 critical access hospitals, 2 children's hospitals, 31 long-term hospitals, 37 psychiatric hospitals, and 20 rehabilitation hospitals;
- Fire Stations - Fire Stations that contain a physical street address as listed in the State Fire Marshall's website (535).
- Police Stations – Police Departments as listed in the Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police 2016 Directory (327); Sheriffs' Offices as listed in the same directory (64); and the nine State Police troops.
- Public Health Units – Facilities provided by the Louisiana Department of Health (70).
- Emergency Medical Service Providers - Licensed Emergency medical transportation companies licensed by Louisiana Department of Health (70)
- Crisis Pregnancy Centers – Crisis Pregnancy Centers as listed on the [prolifelouisiana.org](http://prolifelouisiana.org) website (36).

## 5.0 REPORT FROM THE SAFE HAVEN CONSORTIUM

The Louisiana Safe Haven Consortium was formed in compliance with the 2016 House Concurrent Resolution 107, sponsored by Representatives Willmott and Glover. The Consortium includes a select group of designated entities as defined in HCR 107 along with additional stakeholders such as The Department of Children and Family Services, The Louisiana Department of Education, and Prevent Child Abuse of Louisiana.

The first meeting of the Safe Haven Consortium was held on November 30, 2016. Those present included:

- Paige Hargrove-Louisiana Emergency Response Network;
- Brenda Blanchard-Louisiana Department of Health;
- Caroline Roemer- Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools;
- Lisa Brochard-Louisiana Department of Education;
- Amanda Brunson-Prevent Child Abuse of Louisiana;
- Curry Landry-Louisiana Ambulance Alliance;
- Mike Thompson-Louisiana Hospital Association;
- Karen Lyon- Louisiana State Board of Nurses;
- Stephanie Sterling- National Association of Social Workers;
- Eric Torres-Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners;
- Kathleen Stewart Richey-Louisianachildren.org;
- Department of Children and Family Services' staff: Rhenda Hodnett, Mona Michelli, Lisa Welch, Toni Buxton, Candice LeBlanc, James Hoffman, Lori Miller, Walter Fahr, Lacy Simms, Linda Lafield, Holly Lefebvre

Those entities absent included representatives from:

- The Professional Fire Fighters Association;
- The Louisiana Fire Chief's Association;
- The Louisiana Sheriff's Association;
- The Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police;
- The Louisiana Peace Officers Association;
- The Louisiana State Troopers Association;
- The Magnolia State Peace Officers Association;
- The Louisiana School Board's Association;
- The Louisiana Association of Educators;
- The Louisiana Association of Teachers;
- The Louisiana Association of Student Councils.

As a result of the Consortium meeting and subsequent communications, the following tasks were accomplished:

- Election of a Chairperson: Caroline Roemer, The Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools;
- Election of a Vice Chairperson: Paige Hargrove, The Louisiana Emergency Response Network;

- Adoption of Rules of Procedure for the Consortium; and
- Clarification and official recognition of both Louisianachildren.org and The Louisiana Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers as voting members in the Consortium

Fruitful discussion during the meeting occurred regarding multiple Safe Haven topics. It laid the groundwork for the work of the Consortium. It is anticipated that legislative recommendations will be made from the Consortium for SFY 2018.

The HCR 107 requirement for a registry of designated Safe Haven facilities, with the Consortium entities contributing to the development of this registry was initiated and roles for consortium participants established. The Consortium recognized a challenge in this task without having definitions of the types of designated Safe Haven facilities. One identified challenge was the listing of "medical clinics". The Louisiana Department of Health, through the Consortium, agreed to provide a listing of all federally qualified health centers for the registry of "medical clinics". The Consortium recognized the need for development of recommendations for defining the various Safe Haven designated facilities types.