

Somerville Police Department 		TYPE: GENERAL ORDER		POLICY NUMBER: 120	
		Subject: Safe Haven Act			
		Issuing Authority: David Fallon Chief of Police		Signature: 	Effective Date: June 19, 2015
		Number of Pages: Page 1 of 3			
Accreditation Standards (5th Edition) 41.2.6			<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised <input type="checkbox"/> Amended		
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Purpose

The safe haven act of Massachusetts (2004) allows a parent to legally surrender newborn infants 7 days old or younger at a hospital, police station, or manned fire station without facing criminal prosecution. The safe haven act is an amendment to chapter 119 of M.G.L section 39 ½.

Policy

It is the policy of this department to uphold and enforce all of the provisions and sections of MGL 119 sec 39 ½. In particular, when a parent voluntarily surrenders a newborn infant 7 days of age or younger with an appropriate person at a hospital, police department or manned fire station and there are no signs of abuse or neglect of the infant. [41.2.6]

Definitions

Newborn Infant: a baby 7 days old or younger.

Voluntarily placed, voluntary placement or voluntary abandonment: voluntarily leaving the newborn infant with an appropriate person at a designated facility.

Designated Facility: hospital (it is preferred that the newborns specifically be taken to an acute care hospital emergency department), police department or manned fire station; the locations stipulated by the Safe Haven Law.

Appropriate Person: someone at a designated facility who is able to ensure that the newborn infant is safe; for example, the triage person in a hospital emergency department or duty officer in a police station.

Notification: An immediate notice to be filed with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) on the voluntary surrender of the newborn infant.

Procedures

- A. OIC/Shift Commander or designee will immediately contact your local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider to respond and assess the child's condition on site and then transport the infant to the closest acute care hospital emergency department.
- B. OIC/Shift Commander or designee will notify DCF. Notification is accomplished by following the standard 51A process and filing a Mandated Reporter form.
- C. If one or more of the parents is available.
 1. Thank them for bringing the infant to a safe place.
 2. Ask if they would be willing to provide any information that would assist in planning for the future care of the child.
 3. Inform them that situations often arise, or children have questions as they grow older, that only they as parents can address. You are required to encourage the parent to provide the information but the parent shall not be required to provide such information.
 4. The person accepting a newborn infant at a designated facility shall make every effort to solicit the following information from the parent placing the newborn infant:
 - a. The name of the newborn infant.
 - b. The name and address of the parent placing the newborn infant.
 - c. The location of the newborn infant's birthplace.
 - d. Information relative to the newborn infant's medical history.
 - e. His/her biological family's medical history.
 - f. Any other information that might reasonably assist the department in determining the best interest of the child, including whether the parent plans on returning to seek future custody of the child.

DCF Response to a Safe Haven Baby

- A. Shift Commander/OIC shall contact the area DCF office (see contact info below).
- B. DCF will take immediate custody of the baby once they are notified by phone.
- C. The DCF screener will obtain as much information as possible about the parents, the medical condition of the infant, the name and location of the Safe Haven, and person who received the infant.
- D. DCF will send a social worker to the location of the newborn or the location where the newborn was transported.

- E. Upon notification, DCF will coordinate health care coverage for the newborn through Mass Health or other public assistance programs.

DCF Offices

- A. CAMBRIDGE/SOMERVILLE Area Office
810 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139
Office (617) 520-8700
FAX (617) 354-0243
- B. METRO Regional Office
30 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA 02474
(781) 641-8200
FAX (781) 648-6909
- C. After 5:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays, notify DCF via the Child at Risk Hotline at (800) 792-5200.