



Dena Murphy
Director

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For Immediate Release

NEVER ABANDON YOUR BABY – SAFELY SURRENDER INSTEAD

(Bakersfield, CA) – For most people, the birth of a child is a happy occasion celebrated with family and friends. But for some women, childbirth becomes a crisis - and the decisions made following an infant's birth can be a matter of life or death for the child.

The Safely Surrendered Baby Law responds to the increasing number of newborn infant deaths due to abandonment in unsafe locations. First signed into law in January 2001, the Safely Surrendered Baby Law became permanent in January 2006. The law's intent is to save the lives of newborn infants at risk of abandonment by encouraging parents or persons with lawful custody to safely surrender the infant within 72 hours of birth, with no questions asked. The law exists so that these infants will not be harmed because the mother abandons them, or fails to provide them with care, sometimes leaving them to die. In Kern County, any woman in a crisis situation can safely surrender her infant to any Fire Station personnel or Emergency Room personnel, with no questions asked. The baby must be put into the hands of a responsible person at those locations, not left unattended, in order for it to be considered a safe surrender.

To date, 60 babies have been safely surrendered in Kern County since we began tracking those babies in 2006. Three infants have been safely surrendered in Kern County so far this year. Two babies were safely surrendered in Kern County in 2016. According to the California Department of Social Services, from January 1, 2001, to December 31, 2015, 770 newborns have been surrendered in California, and 84 newborns were surrendered during the 2015 calendar year.

Since the law was passed, the task of educating Kern County residents about this law has fallen to a coalition of dedicated individuals representing a long list of departments, non-profits, hospitals, and stakeholders. We hope that you can assist us with delivering this important message to the people of Kern County, all with the hope that no baby will be abandoned in our Community.

We hope that you can join in our efforts to educate our community about this important option for a woman and her baby in a crisis situation. We have television and audio PSA available if your media outlet would like to share this message with your audience.

Don't abandon your baby. Safely surrender your baby into the hands of any Fire Station or Emergency room personnel. It's safe, legal, and no one has to know.

Coalition member Bakersfield Fire Department PIO John Frando is available for media interviews about this law, and our coalition's work to raise awareness. For contact information or for special arrangements, please contact Heidi Carter-Escudero at 661-633-7104.

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