

Safe Surrender of Newborns

Information for Parents in Crisis



What does the NC Safe Surrender Law say? NC law provides parents in crisis, or who may feel they have no other choice to care for their infant, a way to surrender their newborn safely, legally, and anonymously.

For a Safe Surrender to be considered legal, the infant must be surrendered by a parent to one of the following designated safe persons:

1. A health care provider, as defined under G.S. 90 -21.11, who is on duty or at a hospital or at a local or district health department or at a nonprofit community health center OR
2. A first responder on duty, including a law enforcement officer, a certified emergency medical services worker, or a firefighter OR
3. A social services worker who is on duty or at a local department of social services.

AND

The infant must be determined by a medical professional to be less than 30 days old and free from abuse or neglect.

I have a baby that I can't take care of and I'm terrified that someone will find out. What can I do? NC law gives parents in crisis a way to safely, legally, and anonymously surrender a newborn under 30 days old to a designated safe person on duty. Parents are allowed to hand their infant directly to one of these individuals without sharing any identifying information.

Can a family member safely surrender an infant? No— NC law specifies that a parent must surrender the infant.

What happens to the infant? The designated safe person on duty who receives the infant is required to keep it safe and warm and call the [local Department of Social Services \(DSS\)](#). DSS is required to attempt to locate the baby's non-surrendering parent to allow them to take the infant or request permission for adoption.

What happens if an infant is not handed directly to a designated safe person on duty? If a parent does not hand their infant directly to a designated person on duty, the infant will not be classified as safely surrendered. This may be deemed abandonment under NC law, which could lead to legal consequences for the parent.

What other options are available to a parent who has a baby they are unable to keep? Agencies can help you with prenatal care, arranging for the birth, and/or arranging for the adoption of your child to a safe and loving home. Contact your local [DSS](#) or "Google" adoption resources in NC.

What if I would like to provide health or other information about the baby? A surrendering parent may provide information to the designated safe person who receives the baby. Alternatively, a surrendering parent may complete the [Safe Surrender Health and Information Form](#) in person or by mail to the local [DSS](#).

What is the advice for parents who are not sharing a pregnancy publicly? Seek prenatal care. Talk to someone you trust to give you good advice. If you do not have health insurance, your local [DSS](#) can tell you if you're eligible for Medicaid. Plan for the birth. Having a baby alone or without someone who is medically trained may cause serious injury to you or your child.

I had a baby and now I can't stop bleeding. Plus, I have a fever. Am I in danger? If you have any of the following symptoms, seek medical care right away: vaginal bleeding that does not slow down when you rest, a bad smell to vaginal blood, a fever of 101°F or above, severe headaches, pain in the abdomen or vaginal area, blurred vision, or a feeling of burning when you urinate. *In an emergency, Call 911.*

For more information, visit the [NC DHHS Safe Surrender website](#).