

# TEACHER'S GUIDE



No Shame. No Blame. No Names.

Illinois' Abandoned Newborn  
Infant Protection Act



Dear Educator,

***Ask your students:  
How excited would you be to know you saved a life?***

In 2001, Illinois enacted the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (325 ILCS 2), commonly called a "Baby Safe Haven Law." The law allows a parent to relinquish an unharmed infant legally, safely, and anonymously to personnel at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire or police station with no fear of prosecution and no questions asked.

Illinois law requires health education programs to provide course materials and instruction to inform students of the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act. To assist you in meeting this requirement, the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation is pleased to provide this classroom training video and supplemental teacher's guide.

The law has saved almost 200 infants from abandonment in Illinois, by providing a crucial safe, and legal option to desperate parents with unplanned pregnancies. However, unsafe, illegal abandonments continue, in many cases, due to a lack of familiarity with the law. Teaching about this law will increase awareness and may in fact someday save a life.

Utilizing the law protects a desperate parent from making a life-changing choice to abandon their baby, a decision that will have long-lasting ramifications. Your instruction on the law is vital to its continued effectiveness. We hope you find this information helpful and we welcome any suggestions for improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn M. Geras".

Dawn Geras, President  
Save Abandoned Babies Foundation

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[www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org)



The provided video presents information about the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (also called the Baby Safe Haven Law) and satisfies the legal requirements mandated by the state of Illinois for classroom training.

This guide is a supplement to that video, containing additional resources for your reference in assisting students in understanding the material.

## TEACHING TIPS

You may find that talking about unwanted pregnancies and abandoned babies evokes a strong response or makes some students feel uncomfortable. The video should assist with this. However, further discussions may be necessary for students to understand the provisions of the law and the circumstances that lead to its use.

**The following tips may help to ease any discomfort:**

- **Create a comfortable atmosphere.**  
Be open to what your students are saying and encourage them to listen to one another with respect and without interruption.
- **Encourage participation from everyone.** Review your classroom culture regarding differences of opinion and allow other people to voice their ideas before you begin your discussions.
  - *Comments such as “good point”, “excellent ideas”, “great question” or “a thoughtful response” may encourage more open dialogue.*
- **Provide a variety of discussion formats.**  
Some students find it hard to express their views in a large group but might feel more comfortable speaking out in a smaller group or utilizing anonymous written questions that you read to the group and then discuss.
- **Allow silence.** Silence can be valuable in allowing time for students to process information or collect their thoughts for a response.
- **Consult outside resources.** If you don't know the answer to a question, try to find the information and provide it later. For additional information to go: [www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org) or contact [Info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org](mailto:Info@SaveAbandonedBabies.org)

# VOCABULARY

The following words are defined as they relate to the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (Baby Safe Haven Law):

## Abandon

to leave an infant alone without protection, support, or help. To abandon an infant is illegal. Relinquishing an infant under the Safe Haven Law is legal.

## Adopt

to legally take someone else's child and bring it up as one's own. Adoption is done through the courts.

## Adoption Agency

a private agency that provides adoption services, that is, helps arrange for a child to be adopted (see child-placing agency).

## Adoptive Parents

the person or persons who legally adopt a child.

## Adoption Plan

a plan for placing a child for adoption. The plan is made in advance by the biological parent(s) and an adoption agency, and sometimes, the person or persons who will be adopting the child.

## Alternative

another way to do something, such as relinquishing an infant under the Safe Haven Law (legal) as an alternative to abandoning the infant.

## Baby Safe Haven Law

the common name for the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act.

## Biological Parents

the birth father and mother.

## Child-Placing Agency

a licensed public or private agency that receives a child for the purpose of placing or arranging for the placement of the child in a foster family home or other facilities for childcare, apart from the custody of the child's parents.

## Confidential Adoption

an adoption that takes place without the child or the adoptive parents knowing the identity of the biological birth parent(s).

## DCFS

(Department of Children and Family Services)

an Illinois government agency that oversees the safety of at-risk children in their own homes and the placement of children whose parents are not able or willing to care for them, either for a limited time or permanently.

## **Foster Care**

a person who provides foster care takes care of a child who is “placed” with them by DCFS, without necessarily intending to adopt the child. Foster care is often temporary and may last until the child can be returned home or placed in an adoptive home.

## **Illegal**

not legal; not lawful. Abandoning a baby is illegal.

## **Immunity**

freedom from prosecution. A parent who relinquishes an infant under the Safe Haven Law will have immunity from prosecution.

## **Legal**

lawful; following the law. Relinquishing an infant in accordance with the Safe Haven Law is legal.

## **Legal Custody**

the relationship created by a court order in the best interest of a newborn infant that imposes on the infant’s custodian the responsibility of physical possession of the infant, the duty to protect, train and discipline the infant, and the duty to provide the infant with food, shelter, education, and medical care, except as these are limited by parents’ rights and responsibilities.

## **Maternity / Paternity Testing**

DNA tests that a woman or a man can take that will prove if they are the mother or father of a child.

## **Pre-adoptive Home**

the home of the person or persons who plan to adopt the child, as soon as the adoption process is complete. Infants who are relinquished under the Safe Haven Law go directly to a pre-adoptive home, and not to temporary foster care.

## **Prosecute**

to carry on proceedings in a court against someone in order to seek punishment for a crime. Anyone who abandons a baby commits a crime and may be prosecuted. However, the Safe Haven Law allows a person to hand an unharmed infant to a worker at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire station, police station, or campus police and the person will not be prosecuted.

## **Putative Father**

a man who may be the father of a child.

### **Putative Father Registry**

a program that allows a putative father to register his name, saying that he may be the father of an infant born to a particular woman. Before placing an infant for adoption, an adoption agency must check the Putative Father Registry to try to find out if there is a putative father who is interested in participating in the child's adoption or in parenting the child. Certain DNA tests may be done to prove paternity.

### **Relinquish**

to let go of; release to someone else. A parent may relinquish their infant to a person working at a hospital, emergency medical facility, fire station or police station.

### **Rotating Basis**

taking turns, one after the other. DCFS works with licensed adoption agencies on a rotating basis.



## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

It can be beneficial for students to reflect upon and discuss what they learn in the video through classroom or small group discussions.

**Potential questions might include:**

- **What are your initial thoughts on infant abandonment?**
- **What is the difference between abandoning a baby and relinquishing a baby under the Baby Safe Haven Law?**
- **What are other safe options the parent(s) might consider besides the Baby Safe Haven Law?**
- **Can relinquishing a baby through the Baby Safe Haven Law be a responsible action? Under what circumstances?**
- **If you were a good friend of a mother or father in a desperate situation, what would you advise her/him to do?**
- **Does the Baby Safe Haven Law help other people besides the birth parent(s) of an infant? If so, who are they and how do they benefit?**
- **Can you think of any negative things about this law? If so, what are they?**
- **Are there ways to make the law better? How?**

# Resources to Contact for Help

Text **SAFEHAVEN** to 313131

**Child Help USA**  
(Abuse Hotline)  
1-800-422-4453

**Illinois Department of Children  
and Family Services Hotline**  
1-800-252-2873

**Illinois Adoption Registry**  
1-877-323-5299

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
1-800-799-SAFE

**National Safe Haven Alliance**  
1-888-510-BABY  
[www.NationalSafeHavenAlliance.org](http://www.NationalSafeHavenAlliance.org)

**Public Assistance and Food Stamps**  
Contact your local welfare department  
for more information.

**Save Abandoned Babies Foundation**  
24/7 confidential HELP LINE:  
1-888-510-BABY  
or text SAFEHAVEN to 313131  
[www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org](http://www.SaveAbandonedBabies.org)