



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
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M. JODI RELL
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Governor Rell Focuses Attention on ‘Safe Havens’ Law at Hospital Where Baby Was Brought Christmas Day

Another Safe Havens Baby Brought to Danbury Hospital on Saturday

Governor M. Jodi Rell today spoke at the hospital where a baby was brought on Christmas Day 2007 to focus attention on the state’s “Safe Havens” law, which gives parents a safe alternative to abandoning a newborn baby.

“While rare, a parent, typically a young person who believes he or she has no one to turn to, may feel overwhelmed by caring for an infant -- so overwhelmed that they may consider abandoning that baby,” Governor Rell said at a press conference at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, where a Safe Havens baby was brought Christmas Day 2007. “Parents need to know there is a simple law that gives them a far better alternative.”

The Governor's words came only days after another baby was brought to a Connecticut hospital under the provisions of the Safe Havens Law. The baby, brought to Danbury Hospital on Saturday, April 19, is doing fine and is being placed with a family that is prepared to adopt.

Under the Safe Havens Law, if the baby is 30 days old or younger, the parent can bring the baby to any hospital emergency department in Connecticut, and the parent will not face criminal prosecution. The parent is not required to give information, and the baby will be cared for and quickly placed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) with a licensed family that wants to adopt.

Since the law first took effect October 1, 2000, there have been eight newborns brought to a hospital under the Safe Haven law, including the baby brought to Danbury Hospital Saturday. Prior to the baby brought to St. Francis on Christmas Day 2007, the most recent was brought to Bridgeport Hospital on February 27, 2006. Five babies, including the Bridgeport baby, have been adopted, and another was placed with a relative. The baby brought to St. Francis

on Christmas Day lives with a family in Eastern Connecticut, and the adoption by that family is expected to be completed shortly.

Meanwhile, despite the law, four babies have been abandoned – two in 2001 (in Greenwich and Brookfield), another in July 2004 (in Branford) and one in August 2006 (in Groton). Fortunately, all survived. Two have been adopted, one is living with relatives and one is in a foster home.

"What happened at St. Francis really does feel like a Christmas Day miracle," DCF Commissioner Susan I. Hamilton said. "We have been very fortunate not to have had a tragedy involving an abandoned newborn in recent years. But we have to do everything we can to inform all Connecticut residents that there is a safe alternative available to new parents in these fortunately rare but life-threatening circumstances that will ensure the safety and well-being of the baby."

To promote awareness of the law, DCF sent tens of thousands of pamphlets as well as posters to all 169 Connecticut municipalities and to all middle and high schools during the months of March and April. For the first time this year, the Department has funding identified in the State budget to conduct a radio ad campaign, which is airing now on stations targeting younger listeners.

How the Safe Havens Law Works

- Infants 30 days old or younger can be left at Safe Havens (hospital emergency rooms)
- The parent will be given a packet about the Department of Children and Families (DCF), which will assume custody of the infant
- If the parent changes his or her mind, they should contact DCF and immediately apply to the court for an attorney
- Parental rights will be terminated so that the baby can be adopted
- Parents who do not harm their infant cannot be criminally charged with abandonment if they use a Safe Haven
- A nurse will meet the parent in a private room to obtain medical history, but the parent does not have to answer any questions