

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 03: Initial Response/Detention

Item 017: Safely Surrendered Baby Protocol

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA Mailbox](#)

Issued: **September 26, 2017**

References: Health and Safety Code Section [1255.7](#);
Welfare and Institutions Code Sections [300](#), [309](#),
[361.5](#), and [14005.24](#); Penal Code [271.5](#); [All County
Information Notice \(ACIN\) No. I-19-12](#); [ACIN No. I-
63-16](#); [CDSS Safely Surrendered Baby website](#).

Revisions in Red

Replaces Issue: **November 10, 2015**

[Procedure / Hospital and Other Safe Surrender Site Personnel / Hotline Staff / Initial Screening / Creation of the Referral in CWS/CMS / Assigned SW / SW Response / Required Notification / Team Decision Making \(TDM\) Meeting / Fourteen-Day Cooling-Off Period/Return of Child](#)

Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

The Department of Social Services (DSS) shall consistently implement into practice all laws and regulations enacted, adopted or modified regarding voluntary surrender of infants by biological parent(s).

Purpose

This protocol outlines specific requirements enacted by the *Safe Arms for Newborns* Law which became effective January 1, 2001, and establishes processes for Child Welfare Services compliance.

Safe Surrender Sites In Fresno County

Infants may be surrendered to any public or private hospital emergency room in Fresno County within 72 hours of the infant's birth.

On August 25, 2009, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors designated 50 fire stations in Fresno County as permissible Safe Surrender drop-off sites. The Fresno Fire Department (FFD) Standard Operating Procedures Fire Station Management 206.30 Safely Surrendered Baby Effective: May 2010 requires FFD staff to request that Paramedics respond, take custody of the child, transport the child to a hospital and turn custody of the child over to hospital staff. At that point it is up to hospital staff to notify DSS.

For a list of Safe Surrender sites in Fresno one may call 211 or visit the [211 website](#). For a list of sites throughout California, see the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) [website](#).

Procedure

Hospital and Other Safe Surrender Site Personnel

All public or private hospitals with emergency rooms, fire stations or other locations designated by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors must designate personnel to comply with the Safe Arms for Newborn requirements.

Upon accepting an infant who has been voluntarily surrendered, Safe Surrender Site personnel shall be required to place a coded, confidential ankle bracelet on the child and furnish, or make good faith effort to furnish, the person surrendering the child with a copy of the bracelet and a medical information questionnaire with the identification code that appears on the child's ankle bracelet. This is the only information required of staff to enter on the medical information questionnaire.

- The person surrendering the infant may decline the medical information questionnaire, voluntarily complete it at the time the child is surrendered, or complete it at a later time and return it by mail in an envelope provided for this purpose. Staff shall emphasize the importance of completing the medical questionnaire, designed to gather family medical history, which would be useful in caring for the child. The questionnaire does not require any information that would compromise the identity of the person or parents.

The person taking physical custody of the infant must conduct a medical screening exam and provide any medical care that the child may need. Prior consent from the parent is not required in order to provide medical care to the child.

Hotline Staff

Initial Screening

The DSS Child Abuse Hotline (aka Careline) Social Worker (SW) or Standby SW receiving the call shall collect the following basic facts/information during the initial contact with the Reporting Party (RP):

- The circumstances of the infant's surrender and the date, time and location the infant was surrendered. Clarify that the child is being surrendered pursuant to the Safe Arms for Newborns law.
- The current location of the infant.
- Identifying information about the reporting party.
- Efforts made to collect information about the infant.
- Medical condition of the infant, any medications, names of physicians, clinic, hospital, etc.

- The location of the mother or person surrendering the infant and the person’s level of cooperation in the completion of the questionnaire.
- Has the confidential coded bracelet been placed on the infant and a duplicate been provided to the person surrendering the child?

NOTE: The name of the mother or the person surrendering the infant, and any other identifying information, is **not** to be reported to DSS. If the caller provides this information, it is **not** to be recorded in the DSS referral or other DSS documents.

Creation of the Referral in CWS/CMS

Upon receiving a report of a Safely Surrendered Baby a new Emergency Response referral shall be generated in CWS/CMS in the following manner:

- The infant’s first name shall be recorded as “BabyBoy” or “BabyGirl” with no spaces between words. The last name shall be recorded as “SSB” for Safely Surrendered Baby, plus the Roman numeral representing the number in sequence. Examples: BabyBoy SSB I, BabyGirl SSB II, BabyBoy SSB III, BabyGirl SSB IV.
- In the case of multiple births (twins, triplets, etc.) a letter will be added immediately after the Roman numeral to distinguish between them. For instance, twin girls in the second case under this protocol would be “BabyGirl SSB IIA” and “BabyGirl SSB IIB”.
- The referral/case name will be the same as the infant’s name, but without “Boy” or “Girl” and without any letters added for multiple births. Examples:

<u>Case Name</u>	<u>Child’s Name(s)</u>
Baby SSB I	BabyBoy SSB I
Baby SSB II	BabyGirl SSB II
Baby SSB III	BabyBoy SSB III
Baby SSB IV	BabyGirl SSB IV
Baby SSB II	BabyGirl SSB II, BabyGirl SSB IIB

- The name of the mother or other person surrendering the infant, or any other identifying information, shall not be included anywhere in the referral.
- The new referral shall **not** be merged or associated with any other referrals, cases, or history known to exist for the mother or any siblings of the infant.

Assigned SW

SW Response

The new referral shall be assigned for Immediate Response by an Emergency Response (ER) SW or other designated SW.

The SW shall take custody of the newborn through the use of form [CWS 0080](#), Safely Surrendered Baby in Custody.

NOTE: Although the infant is in the hospital, this is only occasion when the SW is allowed to place **an infant into Protective Custody**.

The SW must contact the Permanency Planning Division of DSS as soon as possible to begin arrangements for **a placement with a Resource Family cleared for adoption**. This is done by calling the Coordinator Supervisor at 600-4446 or 600-6400; or by email to “[DSS Risk Adopt Referral](#)”.

Required Notification

The assigned SW shall **immediately** notify the CDSS of each Safely Surrendered Baby taken into temporary custody. This is accomplished by completing the following mandatory steps for written notification and notification via CWS/CMS documentation.

- Download and complete form SOC 880, *Safely Surrendered Baby- Report to the California Department of Social Services*. To protect confidential information, such as the referral ID number that is requested on the form, DSS staff shall send the completed form via **secure** email to the CDSS Child Welfare Policy and Program Development Bureau at ssb@dss.ca.gov.
- In the referral notebook of CWS/CMS, select the “Special Projects” tab. Click on the (+) button in the Special Project grid. From the drop-down menu that appears, select “Safely Surrendered Baby,” and enter the date of the referral start date. Do not enter an ‘end’ date – this field will populate automatically when appropriate.
- The infant’s identification bracelet number shall be entered into the client notebook in the following manner:
 - Open the child’s Client Notebook and select the “ID Num” (number) tab.
 - In the Identification Numbers grid click on the (+) to add an ID Number Type.
 - Select “Medical Record” from the “Select ID Type” drop-down menu.
 - Enter the number in the new field.

Within 24 hours **of the infant being placed into Protective Custody**, the assigned SW shall report all known identifying information concerning the **infant**, except personal identifying information pertaining to the parent or individual who surrendered the child, to the California Missing Children Clearinghouse ([CMCC](#)) and to the National Crime Information Center ([NCIC](#)). Both can be accomplished by calling the 24-hour CMCC Hotline at (800) 222-3463. According to CMCC staff, their agency enters the report into the California Unidentified Persons System, which automatically forwards the record to the NCIC. Therefore, reporting the surrendered baby to the CMCC fulfills the

counties' requirement to report this information to both agencies pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 1255.7(e).

Team Decision Making (TDM) Meeting

The assigned SW shall schedule a TDM as soon as-possible after the time that the infant **was placed into Protective Custody**. The assigned ER SW, the ER Social Work Supervisor (SWS) and a Risk Adopt SW shall attend the TDM. The SW shall consult with his/her supervisor prior to inviting any other persons to attend the TDM.

The assigned ER SW shall follow the established procedures for contacting the Foster Care Eligibility Unit and completing the necessary documents: FC2, EA1, SAWS1 and MC250.

Fourteen-Day Cooling-Off Period/Return of Child

The 14-day period begins the day the child was voluntarily surrendered. During the 14-day Cooling-off Period, the person who surrendered the child may return to reclaim the child. The person's identity may only be confirmed by presenting the duplicate confidential coded bracelet that was provided to him/her at the time of the baby's surrender.

The child may be returned within the 14-day period under the following circumstances:

- If the person who voluntarily surrendered the child returns and requests that the hospital return the child **prior to the infant being placed into Protective Custody** or a petition being filed, the hospital may, if it still has custody of the child, either return the child or contact DSS if a hospital health practitioner believes the child has been a victim of abuse or neglect or may be at risk of abuse or neglect if returned to the person who voluntarily surrendered the child.
- **If the infant was placed into Protective Custody**, but the petition has not yet been filed when the person who voluntarily surrendered the infant returns for the child, his/her identifying information shall be added to the referral. The (SW) shall then investigate and assess the infant's family to determine if there is any risk of abuse or neglect of the child or other children in the home. The SW shall provide service referrals or lists of resources to the parent(s) as assessed to be appropriate to the family's circumstances.
- If the person who voluntarily surrendered the infant returns and requests that the hospital return the infant after a petition has been filed, DSS shall verify the identity of the person and conduct an assessment. If the SW determines there is no imminent risk in returning the child, the SW shall request that the Juvenile Court dismiss the Petition for Dependency and order the release of the child.
- The SW shall provide service referrals or lists of resources to the parent(s) as assessed to be appropriate to the family's circumstances.

Whenever an infant, initially surrendered, is returned to a parent:

- The SW must notify the Eligibility Worker (EW) of the child's return as soon as possible. The EW shall also be provided with the identifying information of the parent(s).
- The "Safely Surrendered Baby" Special Project designation in CWS/CMS shall not be deleted. The SW shall ensure that this designation remains in the database.
- The family's demographic and identifying information shall be added to the appropriate pages and notebooks in CWS/CMS.