

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

506



FROM: Riverside County Fire Department

SUBMITTAL DATE:
March 14, 2005

SUBJECT: Approve Fire Department adoption of Safely Surrender Baby Program (Newborn Abandonment Law, SB 1386)

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:
Adopt the Safely Surrender Baby program (Newborn Abandonment Law, SB 1386)

BACKGROUND: Infant abandonment is an event that does not occur very often, but when it does, it often results in serious injury or death. In 2000, the California Legislature passed SB1368, the Safely Surrender Baby program. The purpose of the law is to encourage parents to bring their infants, up to three days old, to reception centers such as fire stations, rather than abandon them in dumpsters or bushes. No names are required and the parent(s) will not be subject to prosecution for child abandonment. The baby will receive needed medical treatment and be placed in an adoptive home.

You can help save an abandoned infant and spread the word about this law by authorizing the Riverside County Fire Department to adopt the program. The Riverside County Fire Department proposed program is modeled after the very successful and similar program implemented by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Craig E. Anthony
Craig E. Anthony, Fire Chief

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ 0	In Current Year Budget:	NO
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$ N/A	Budget Adjustment:	NO
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ 0	For Fiscal Year:	N/A

SOURCE OF FUNDS:	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	<input type="checkbox"/>

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVE**

County Executive Office Signature *at Roswell*

Dept't Recomm.: Consent Policy
Per Exec. Ofc.: Consent Policy

Prev. Agn. Ref.: | **District:** All | **Agenda Number:** **3.10**

Departmental Concurrence

What is the Safely Surrendered Baby Law?

The Safely Surrendered Baby Law allows a parent or person with lawful custody of an infant to surrender the infant confidentially, without fear of arrest or prosecution for child abandonment. This law allows for a 14-day cooling off period, which begins the day the infant is voluntarily surrendered. During this period, the person who surrendered the infant can return to the hospital to reclaim the infant.

Why is California Doing This?

The purpose of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law is to protect infants from being abused or worse, die, because they were abandoned.

You may have heard the numerous tragic stories of infants left in dumpsters or public toilets. The persons who committed these acts may have been under severe emotional distress. The distressed parent may have hidden their pregnancies, fearful of what would happen if their families found out. Because they were afraid and had nowhere to turn for help, the infants were abandoned.

Abandoning an infant puts that infant in extreme danger. It is also illegal. Too often, it results in the infant's death. Because of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, this tragedy doesn't have to happen in California again.

How does it work?

A distressed parent who is unable or unwilling to care for an infant can legally, confidentially and safely surrender the infant within three (3) days of birth. All that is required is that the infant be brought to a hospital emergency room or other designated site such as a fire station. As long as the child shows no signs of abuse or neglect, no name or other information is required. A bracelet will be placed on the infant for identification purposes. A matching bracelet will be given to the parent. The bracelet will connect the parent to the infant if the parent wants the infant back.

Does a Parent Have to Give Any Information to the Facility Taking the Infant?

No information is required. Hospital or Riverside County Fire Department personnel will give the parent a medical information questionnaire designed to gather family medical history, which is useful in caring for the infant. It is up to the parent if they wish to give any additional information concerning the infant.

What Happens to the Infant?

The infant will be examined and provided medical attention, if needed. Child Protective Services will then place the infant in a foster or pre-adoptive home.

What Happens to the Parent?

Parents who safely surrender the infant may leave the hospital emergency room or other designated site without fear of arrest or prosecution for child abandonment. Their identity will remain confidential and they will have the comfort of knowing the infant will remain in safe hands. If during the cooling off period the parent decides that they want to reclaim the infant, they can take the identifying bracelet back to the hospital and staff will provide information about the infant.

Why Should Riverside County Fire Department Enact the Program?

Riverside County Fire Department has stations geographically located in communities where it would be easy for a parent to transfer the infant to fire department personnel rather than abandoning the infant in a dumpster or other location. Riverside County Fire Stations are community centers that are trusted by the local residents. Riverside County firefighters are trained Emergency Medical Technicians or Paramedics, which provides immediate medical attention and will help with the care of the abandoned infant. This Program is truly a community based, life saving opportunity for infants.

Adopting the Program will require no additional personnel costs, however, minor operating expenses for the toll free telephone contact number, (800) 472-5697, identifying infant refuge signs for fire stations, educational and implementation costs. A self-paced local computer-training course will be required of Riverside County Fire Department personnel.

Both the Riverside County Sheriff and Child Protective Services fully support the Riverside County Fire Department adopting this Program.