

**Halifax Fire Department**

November 11, 2004

**STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**

**Safe Haven Act of Massachusetts**

**18.01 PURPOSE**

- A. To establish guidelines so that all personnel shall have a clear understanding of their responsibilities if an infant is abandoned at the fire station while manned.

**18.02 DEFINITION**

- A. The Safe Haven Act of Massachusetts (2004) allows a parent or guardian to legally abandon newborn infants seven (7) days old or younger at a hospital, police station, or manned fire station without facing criminal prosecution. The Safe Haven Act is an amendment to Chapter 119 of the Massachusetts General Laws, section 39½. The law became effective on October 29, 2004.

**18.03 POLICY**

These guidelines shall be followed whenever an infant seven (7) days old or younger is voluntarily abandoned or voluntarily left with you at the Halifax Fire Department.

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**18.04 PROCEDURES**

1. Notify Dispatch as soon as possible that you have received an infant under The Safe Haven Act.
2. On duty EMS personnel shall assess the child's medical condition, provide the appropriate medical care and transport the infant to the closest acute care hospital emergency room.
3. Notify the Department of Social Services (DSS). Notification is accomplished by following the standard 51A process and filing a Mandated Reporter form. DSS will work with you and any involved medical professionals to ensure that the child's needs are met and any subsequent transitions of care are coordinated.
4. If one of the parents is available:
  - ☐ Thank him/her for bringing the infant to a safe place.
  - ☐ Ask him/her if they would be willing to provide any information that would assist in planning for the future care of the child. Inform them that situations often arise, or children have questions as they grow older, that only they as parents can address. You are required to encourage the parent to provide the information but *the parent shall not be required to provide such information*. The person accepting a newborn infant at this designated facility shall make every effort to solicit the following information from the parent placing the newborn infant:
    - a. the name of the newborn infant;
    - b. the name and address of the parent placing the infant;
    - c. the location of the newborn infant's birthplace;
    - d. information relative to the newborn infant's medical history;
    - e. his or her biological family's medical history, if available; and
    - f. any other information that might reasonably assist the department in determining the best interest of the child, including whether the parent or guardian plans on returning to seek future custody of the child.

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- ☐ Ask if they have a safe place for themselves and/or a way to get home and offer assistance if needed and available.
- ☐ Offer information on local services such as crisis support, counseling or teen parent support services;

**Parental Stress Hotline:** 24 Hours, 7 Days.

Support and referrals for parents with children of any age, as well as for other family members, care givers, friends and relatives.

**1-(800) 632-8188**

**Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (DSS):** 24 Hours, 7 Days.

Hotline provides info. and referral for DSS from 9AM - 5PM and after hours (5 P.M. - 9 A.M.) is a crisis hotline for DSS. Primarily used to file 51 A reports.

**1-(800) 792-5200**

**Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC):** M-F, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

Protective child welfare agency; provides info & referral; adolescent parent services; and family advocacy services.

**1-(800) 442-3035**

**National Runaway Switchboard:** 24 Hours, 7 Days.

Helps children find shelters. Contacts parents or finds social service agency for protection.

Staffed by young volunteers, hotline is primarily for children.

**1-(800) 621-4000**