



SAFE PLACE
FOR NEWBORNS

Providing a safe
place for mom and
baby in Wisconsin
since 2001.



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Recognizing an expanded Safe Haven Law

Since 2001,
more than 400
newborns have been
safely relinquished into
the arms of trained
professionals.

On March 13, 2026, Governor Tony Evers signed an expansion to Wisconsin's Safe Haven Law, allowing the safe relinquishment of newborns up to 30 days old.

Previously, the law – first signed in April 2001 – allowed for safe, anonymous relinquishments of newborns up to 72 hours old. The expansion, says Tricia Burkett, Safe Place For Newborns Program Coordinator, will allow for more safe, anonymous relinquishments.

"This expansion will make a meaningful impact for both moms and babies in Wisconsin," Tricia shared. "By growing the relinquishment window to 30 days, more babies that may have been at risk of unsafe abandonment will be saved."

About Safe Place for Newborns

Safe Place for Newborns works to provide education and raise awareness about the Safe Haven Law in Wisconsin. Ultimately, Safe Place for Newborns works to save the lives of newborns in danger of abandonment while preserving the health and future of their mothers with no questions asked.



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Celebrating 25 years of Safe Place for Newborns

In April 2001, Helen Healy's vision for saving the lives of babies in Wisconsin had come to fruition with the signing of the Safe Haven Law.

Her brother was involved in passing similar legislation in Minnesota, and when Helen learned of a baby dying in a Wisconsin dorm room, she knew she couldn't sit idle.

"I couldn't shake the thought that if a young, scared mother knew there was a safe, legal, compassionate option a life could have been saved," Helen said. "Starting the program was about protecting babies and giving parents a safe option in moments of crisis."

Helen quickly went to work in getting the Safe Haven Law passed in Wisconsin. She worked closely with legislators, testified at hearings and helped explain the importance of the law to lawmakers.

When lobbying at the Wisconsin State Capitol, Helen brought her newborn son Jack – the fourth of seven children – with her to help remind legislators why the work mattered.

"Giving desperate parents a dignified, non-punitive option was not about politics, it was about saving lives," she shared.

Helen's efforts paid off: the law was signed by Governor Scott McCallum on April 3, 2001. After the bill passed, she served on the Rule-Making Authority Committee in Wisconsin to help shape how the law would work in practice and how hospitals, first responders and community partners would implement it.

Helen spent time working alongside Terry Walsh, the first executive director of Safe Place for Newborns, to focus on outreach and education. Together, they made sure the process was clearly understood and truly accessible.

In the first year, one baby was safely relinquished into the arms of a trained professional. **Today, 25 years later, more than 400 newborn lives have been saved thanks to Safe Place for Newborns.**

"When I hear that more than 400 babies have been safely relinquished instead of abandoned since 2001, I think about lives saved and the families that have adopted these babies," Helen said. "Much of this is due to the amazing work of Tricia Burkett and Ascension Wisconsin. Seeing the ongoing outreach and education gives me hope, and their reach continues to grow and have a meaningful impact."

About Helen Healy

Helen's efforts and activism in the early 2000s made it possible for more than 400 babies to be safely relinquished into the arms of trained professionals. Today, Helen lives in Minnesota with her husband, Tim, where they serve as founders of Trinity Woods Catholic Retreat Center. They are the parents of seven children and the proud grandparents of four.

Helen



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Safe Place in Action

By raising
awareness of the
Safe Haven Law,
more lives can
be saved.

Breanna believed she had no other option. Had she known about Safe Place for Newborns, she could have delivered her baby safely in a hospital and placed her daughter into the caring hands of medical staff.

On August 16, 2010, Breanna went to work at a now-closed Perkins restaurant in Racine. Shortly after beginning her shift, she gave birth to a baby girl. Overwhelmed and unsure how she could raise a child, she made a tragic decision – placing the newborn in a garbage bag inside a trash can before driving herself to the nearest emergency department.

At the hospital, staff questioned Breanna about whether she had recently given birth. She initially denied it, but as questioning continued, police were called and she ultimately told them what had happened.

Breanna later pleaded guilty to reckless homicide and served nine years in prison. While incarcerated, she received a letter from Tricia Burkett, program director of Safe Place for Newborns.

"I saw the letter and didn't want to open it," Breanna recalled. "I didn't know what it would say, but I finally read it. Tricia came to visit me and told me about Safe Place for Newborns and the Safe Haven Law."

Tricia asked Breanna to share her story to raise awareness – a decision that would help others learn about a safe, legal option before a crisis turns into tragedy.

After Breanna agreed to tell her story on the news, a woman came to the hospital sharing that she had seen her story and wanted to choose Safe Haven for her baby.