



## Safe Haven Data Request

Safe Haven, also known as “newborn relinquishment,” allows a parent to leave their newborn in a safe place in certain circumstances with certain individuals.

Under [Wisconsin Statutes § 48.195](#), a parent can leave their unharmed newborn (under 72 hours old) anonymously and without fear of prosecution in a newborn infant safety device as defined in 48.195(1b)(b) or with a:

- Law enforcement officer
- Emergency medical services practitioner
- Hospital staff member

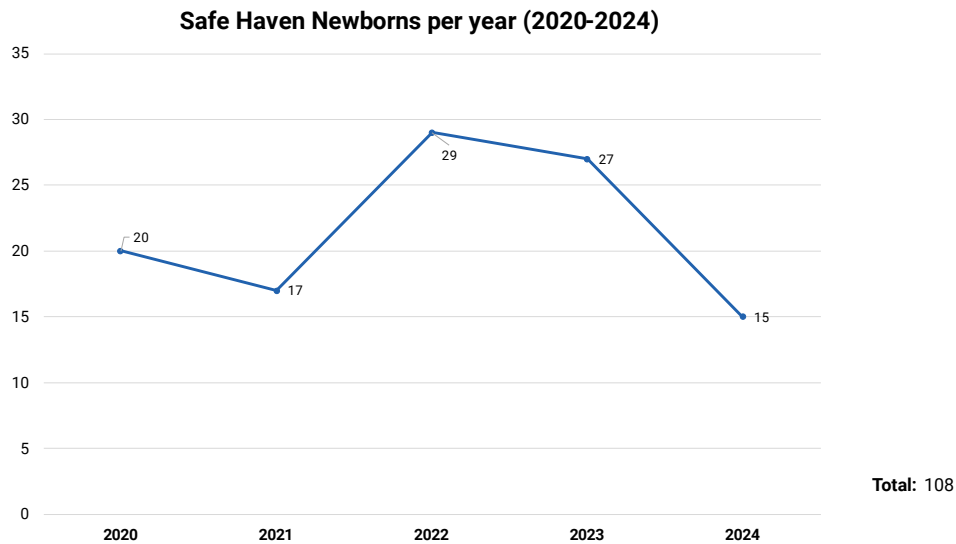
If the parent does not indicate that they will be back for their child, this is called “Safe Haven” or “newborn relinquishment.” Birth parents do not have to give their name or address to the professional accepting the newborn unless:

- The newborn has been the victim of abuse or neglect.
- The parent is being forced by someone to give up their newborn.
- The newborn is more than 72 hours old.

Wisconsin is a state-supervised, county-run child welfare system, except for Milwaukee County which is run the by state. Counties are responsible for administering the infant relinquishment law (Wis. Stat. § 48.195) and for entering reports into eWiSACWIS. While the Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides recommendations on documentation of Safe Haven cases, documentation may vary by county due to the complicated nature of these cases. Because of this, it is possible that this data may undercount the number of cases across the state.

DCF does have responsibility for [policy and practice requirements](#) for local child protective service agencies related to newborn relinquishment and infant reclamation consistent with Wisconsin Safe Haven law, which was enacted in 2001 by Wisconsin Act 2. An overview can be located on the DCF website’s [Safe Haven webpage](#).

The chart below provides the number of Safe Haven newborns left at Safe Haven locations in accordance with Wisconsin’s Safe Haven law for the years 2020- 2024. There have been 108 newborns in the Safe Haven program for these years. There is slight variance of yearly totals over this timeframe.



During this five-year timeframe, 28 counties (39%) had a Safe Haven newborn relinquished in this timeframe. The counts were highest in Milwaukee County, with 32% of all the total newborns in this timeframe. The increases in 2022 and 2023 were largely driven by three larger counties who saw increases in Safe Haven relinquishments during these years.

At the 2025 DCF Tribal Consultation meeting, the question was posed re: if there has been any impact on Wisconsin Safe Haven data related to the Supreme Court Decision in June, 2022 to overturn Roe. V Wade. This Supreme Court decision held that there was no longer a federal constitutional right to an abortion.

The data above includes some year-to-year variation but does not appear to show a trend directly coinciding with the Supreme Court decision. The reasons an individual may choose infant relinquishment can be complex. DCF does not collect data regarding the reasons a parent may have decided to relinquish an infant. Due to the complexity of this decision, we are not able to attribute the data to any specific reason.