

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

ACT 223 (HB 603)

2015 Regular Session

Willmott

Existing law known commonly as the "safe haven law" (Ch. C. Art. 1149 et seq.) provides a mechanism by which a parent may relinquish the care of an infant who is not more than 60 days old to the state in safety, anonymity, and without fear of prosecution.

New law provides for official designation of existing law as the "Safe Haven Law".

Existing law provides that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) shall produce and issue written information, training materials, and an instructional video to be made available for download on the department's website for the instruction of representatives of emergency medical care facilities who are designated to receive relinquished children and to interview relinquishing parents.

New law adds a requirement that DCFS review all of its information, materials, video, and any other media relating to the Safe Haven Law at least annually. Further requires, to the extent funding is available for such purposes, that DCFS update, revise, and reissue these resources as the secretary of the department deems necessary.

New law requires DCFS to develop and implement annually each of the following plans:

- (1) An annual communication and public information action plan to increase public awareness of the Safe Haven Law. New law provides that this plan shall include, without limitation, all of the following actions:
 - (a) Issuing media releases for distribution to print, radio, and television media.
 - (b) Disseminating information through social media.
 - (c) Conducting outreach to the public through collaborations with community-based organizations, child protection stakeholder groups, offices of state government, and any other entities the DCFS secretary deems appropriate.
 - (d) Undertaking any other communication or publicity activity deemed necessary by the DCFS secretary and for which sufficient funding is available.
- (2)(a) An action plan providing for dissemination of information and training resources relating to the Safe Haven Law to designated emergency care facilities.
- (b) New law provides that to the extent the DCFS secretary deems appropriate, and contingent upon availability of funding for this purpose, DCFS may also disseminate information and resources relating to the Safe Haven Law to any of the following:
 - (i) Schools of medicine.
 - (ii) Schools of nursing.
 - (iii) Law enforcement training schools.
 - (iv) Firefighter training programs.
 - (v) Emergency medical service provider training programs.
 - (vi) Any other institutions that train professionals who typically work in a designated emergency care facility.

New law requires DCFS, on or before Jan. 1 annually, to submit to the legislative committees on health and welfare a report addressing efforts undertaken to raise public awareness of the Safe Haven Law.

Existing law entitled the "Children's Trust Fund Act" (R.S. 46:2401 et seq.) creates and provides for the Children's Trust Fund to support programs designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. New law declares that outreach, communications, and other efforts to raise public awareness concerning the Safe Haven Law are consistent with the purposes of the Children's Trust Fund Act; and deems such efforts to qualify as programs eligible to be funded by the Children's Trust Fund.

Effective August 1, 2015.

(Amends Ch. C. Arts. 1149 and 1160 and R.S. 46:2403(D))