

MISSOURI LAW

210.950. 1. This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Safe Place for Newborns Act of 2002". The purpose of this section is to protect newborn children from injury and death caused by abandonment by a parent, and to provide safe and secure alternatives to such abandonment.

2. As used in this section, the following terms mean:

- (1) "Hospital", as defined in section 197.020, RSMo;
- (2) "Nonrelinquishing parent", the biological parent who does not leave a newborn infant with any person listed in subsection 3 of this section in accordance with this section;
- (3) "Relinquishing parent", the biological parent or person acting on such parent's behalf who leaves a newborn infant with any person listed in subsection 3 of this section in accordance with this section.

3. A parent shall not be prosecuted for a violation of section 568.030, 568.032, 568.045 or 568.050, RSMo, for actions related to the voluntary relinquishment of a child up to five days old pursuant to this section and it shall be an affirmative defense to prosecution for a violation of sections 568.030, 568.032, 568.045 and 568.050, RSMo, that a parent who is a defendant voluntarily relinquished a child no more than one year old pursuant to this section if:

(1) Expressing intent not to return for the child, the parent voluntarily delivered the child safely to the physical custody of any of the following persons:

- (a) An employee, agent, or member of the staff of any hospital, in a health care provider position or on duty in a nonmedical paid or volunteer position;
- (b) A firefighter or emergency medical technician on duty in a paid position or on duty in a volunteer position; or
- (c) A law enforcement officer;

(2) The child was no more than one year old when delivered by the parent to any person listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection; and

(3) The child has not been abused or neglected by the parent prior to such voluntary delivery.

4. A person listed in subdivision (1) of subsection 3 of this section shall, without a court order, take physical custody of a child the person reasonably believes to be no more than one year old and is delivered in accordance with this section by a person purporting to be the child's parent. If delivery of a newborn is made pursuant to this section in any place other than a hospital, the person taking physical custody of the child shall arrange for the immediate transportation of the child to the nearest hospital licensed pursuant to chapter 197, RSMo.

5. The hospital, its employees, agents and medical staff shall perform treatment in accordance with the prevailing standard of care as necessary to protect the physical health or safety of the child. The hospital shall notify the division of family services and the local juvenile officer upon receipt of a child pursuant to this section. The local juvenile officer shall immediately begin protective custody proceedings and request the child be made a ward of the court during the child's stay in the medical facility. Upon discharge of the child from the medical facility and pursuant to a protective custody order ordering custody of the child to the division, the division of family services shall take physical custody of the child. The parent's voluntary delivery of the child in accordance with this section shall constitute the parent's implied consent to any such act and a voluntary relinquishment of such parent's parental rights.

6. In any termination of parental rights proceeding initiated after the relinquishment of a child pursuant to this section, the juvenile officer shall make public notice that a child has been relinquished, including the sex of the child, and the date and location of such relinquishment. Within thirty days of such public notice, the nonrelinquishing parent wishing to establish parental rights shall identify himself or herself to the court and state his or her intentions regarding the child. The court shall initiate proceedings to establish paternity, or if no person identifies himself as the father within thirty days, maternity. The juvenile officer shall make examination of the putative father registry established in section 192.016, RSMo, to determine whether attempts have previously been made to preserve parental rights to the child. If such attempts have been made, the juvenile officer shall make reasonable efforts to provide notice of the abandonment of the child to such putative father.

7. (1) If a relinquishing parent of a child relinquishes custody of the child to any person listed in subsection 3 of this section in accordance with this section and to preserve the parental rights of the nonrelinquishing parent, the nonrelinquishing parent shall take such steps necessary to establish parentage within thirty days after the public notice or specific notice provided in subsection 6 of this section.

(2) If a nonrelinquishing parent fails to take steps to establish parentage within the thirty-day period specified in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the nonrelinquishing parent may have all of his or her rights terminated with respect to the child.

(3) When a nonrelinquishing parent inquires at a hospital regarding a child whose custody was relinquished pursuant to this section, such facility shall refer the nonrelinquishing parent to the division of family services and the juvenile court exercising jurisdiction over the child.

8. The persons listed in subdivision (1) of subsection 3 of this section shall be immune from civil, criminal, and administrative liability for accepting physical custody of a child pursuant to this section if such persons accept custody in good faith. Such immunity shall not extend to any acts or omissions, including negligent or intentional acts or omissions, occurring after the acceptance of such child.

9. The division of family services shall:

(1) Provide information and answer questions about the process established by this section on the statewide, toll-free telephone number maintained pursuant to section 210.145;

(2) Provide information to the public by way of pamphlets, brochures, or by other ways to deliver information about the process established by this section.

10. Nothing in this section shall be construed as conflicting with section 210.125.