

2025-2026 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY



KERN COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES SAFELY SURRENDERED BABY LAW

No Shame, No Blame, No Names

**Release Date
June 2, 2026**

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SUMMARY:

According to Time magazine:

In earlier years, babies were often surrendered through various mechanisms, including the use of “ruota,” or wheel systems, at Catholic-run hospitals for orphans and foundlings in medieval Italy. These systems allowed parents to place a baby on a turntable outside and rotate it indoors without being identified. This practice was part of a broader effort to prevent infanticide and care for illegitimate babies surrendered by poor single women seeking to hide the evidence of their supposed sins. Historians estimated that by the 18th century, as many as one third of babies born in Europe were surrendered anonymously.

(www.time.com/devastating-history-baby-relinquishment)

According to one of the authors of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, “The law’s intent is to save lives of newborn infants at risk of abandonment by encouraging parents or persons with lawful custody to safely surrender the infant within 72 hours of birth, no questions asked.... The Safely Surrendered Baby Law was first made permanent in January 2006. Its primary goal is to prevent infant abandonment and save the lives of newborns at risk by providing a safe and anonymous option for parents who are unable to or unwilling to care for their infants.”

(www.cdss.ca.gov/infosources/safely-surrender-baby)

Thus far in Kern County, between 2006-2026, 105 infants were surrendered. The 2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the process of surrendering an infant, and if it is in compliance with the law.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

On February 9, 2026, a newborn baby was found deceased at about 1:30 a.m. The Bakersfield Police were called to the scene at a plaza near Panama Lane. It is believed that a woman gave birth to a baby in the space between two dumpsters. California Penal Code §925, authorizes the Grand Jury to investigate the operations and management of the Kern County Department of Human Services. This report is a review of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law (SSBL).



Picture of a Safely Surrendered Baby Logo taken from www.amazon.com/shop/babysafetysigns

METHODOLOGY:

To assess the situation, the Grand Jury conducted interviews with Kern County personnel directly involved in the SSBL, performed internet research, and reviewed a Safely Surrendered Baby packet.

DISCUSSION OF FACTS:

All 50 states now have an SSBL, and the time limit to surrender an infant varies from 72 hours to 365 Days. The most common is 30 days in 20 states and only six states have 72 hours, California being one of them. In Kern County, from 2006 to date, there have been 105 babies safely surrendered in this program, of which 11 babies have been reclaimed. Statewide, there have been 1,424 babies safely surrendered, and of those numbers, 61 of them have been reclaimed. A mother or legal guardian has 14 days to reclaim the child, a process which is safe, legal, and anonymous. (See Appendix A)

- A. Parents can safely surrender their baby at any fire station or hospital 24 hours a day -7 days per week, in Kern County.
- B. Most hospitals and fire stations in Kern County have a Safely Surrendered Baby Logo displayed.
- C. The process is safe, legal, and anonymous.
- D. At the time of surrender, a kit is provided containing an ID bracelet, which is placed on the baby; a matching bracelet is provided to the parent or lawful guardian, to be used should they choose to reclaim the baby.
- E. A parent or person with lawful custody has up to 14 days from the time of surrender to reclaim their baby.
- F. This law has significantly reduced the number of baby abandonments in Kern County and the State.

- G. Since its enactment in 2006, the Safely Surrendered Baby Program has provided a safe alternative for parents in crisis. The Safely Surrendered Baby Coalition is an asset to Kern County. (See Appendix B)
- H. The Safely Surrendered Baby Program has numerous posters in English and Spanish.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The Department of Human Services is conducting an inventory of Safely Surrendered Baby kits at all fire stations and hospitals.
- F2. If the parent or guardian loses the bracelet, and they want to reclaim their baby, there are other processes the Kern County Department of Human Services can use to ensure the baby is reunited with their legal parent or guardian.
- F3. The Department of Human Services has English and Spanish posters, but they can provide translated printed posters in additional languages, if requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The 2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury recommends:

- R1. By July 1, 2026, the Kern County Department of Human Services send the Grand Jury an update on their inventory of preparedness for the Safely Surrender Baby Program they are working on with the Kern County Fire Department and hospitals.
(Finding F1)
- R2. The Kern County Department of Human Services should keep up their great work.
(Findings F1, F2 and F3)

COMMENTS:

The 2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury would like to thank the Department of Human Services Safely Surrendered Baby Coalition Team for the time and effort they took in explaining and giving us the information needed.

NOTES:

- The Kern County Board of Supervisors and the Kern County Department of Human Services should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.
- Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at: www.kerncounty.com/grandjury
- Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.kerncounty.com/grandjury

RESPONSE DEADLINE:

- **REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS FROM:**
Kern County Board of Supervisors
Findings F1, F2 and F3
Recommendations R1 and R2
- **REQUESTED WITHIN 60 DAYS FROM:**
Kern County Department of Human Services
Findings F1, F2 and F3
Recommendations R1 and R2

RESPONSES ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE §§933(c) AND 933.05:

- **PRESIDING JUDGE**
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF KERN
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 212
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301
- **FOREMAN**
KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
1415 TRUXTUN AVENUE, SUITE 600
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93301

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Cal. Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.
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DISCLAIMER:

This report was issued by the Grand Jury with the exception of a Juror(s) pursuant to Penal Code §916.2(a). The Juror(s) was/were excluded from all parts of the inquiry/investigation, including interviews, deliberations, and the writing and approval of this report.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A



Social Services

SSB Data



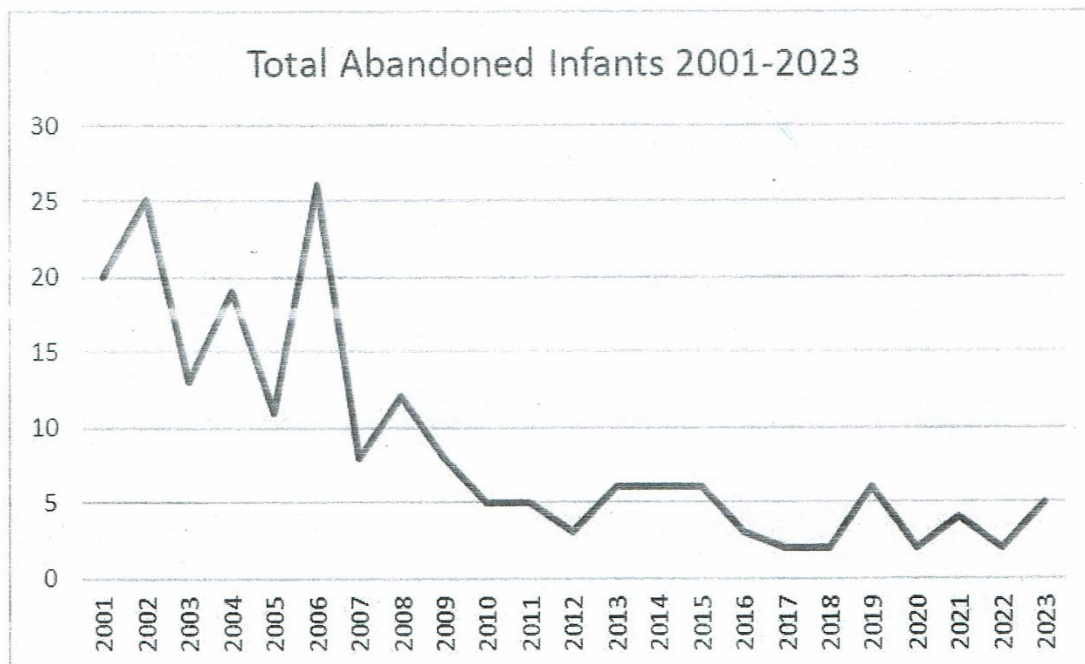
Safely Surrendered Baby Data

Year	Reclaimed	Safely Surrendered	Total Abandoned	Abandoned Surviving	Abandoned Deceased
2001	0	2	20	7	13
2002	0	17	25	13	12
2003	0	25	13	5	8
2004	1	33	19	7	12
2005	0	52	11	4	7
2006	0	65	26	10	16
2007	1	47	8	4	4
2008	0	61	12	3	9
2009	1	57	8	2	6
2010	5	71	5	2	3
2011	2	48	5	1	4
2012	4	72	3	0	3
2013	2	62	6	2	4
2014	0	74	6	4	2
2015	5	83	6	5	1
2016	4	72	3	3	0



Social Services

2017	5	90	2	2	0
2018	4	79	2	1	1
2019	3	81	6	4	2
2020	3	77	2	0	2
2021	6	79	4	3	1
2022	10	94	2	1	1
2023	5	83	5	4	1
TOTAL	61	1424	199	87	112



APPENDIX B

The Safety Surrendered Baby Coalition

is made possible through the hard work of the dedicated individuals from the following organizations:













Questions, call 211 or
1-877-BABYSAF (222-9723)
www.kcdhs.org/ssb

