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COUNTY TAKES CUSTODY OF ANOTHER INFANT UNDER SAFE HAVEN PROGRAM

Hamilton County Prosecutor Joseph Deters announced today that the county has been granted temporary custody of a baby girl who was dropped off at Mercy Franciscan Hospital Monday, May 2 under the "Safe Haven for Newborns" Program.

Under the Safe Haven for Newborns program, a birth parent who is unable to raise a child may relinquish the newborn to medical workers at a hospital, fire department or a peace officer at a law enforcement agency. If the child is less than 72 hours old and has not been abused, the parents will not be prosecuted and can remain anonymous. The law, which was enacted in April, 2001, was designed to prevent parents from abandoning unwanted infants in unsafe places.

The baby, delivered to the hospital Monday afternoon, had been born at home that morning. The mother told nurses that she at first thought she could care for the child. The little girl weighed 7 pounds, 2.8 ounces and is healthy.

Hamilton County Children's Services, which holds temporary custody, will place the child today in a foster "resource" home and begin the process for the foster parents to adopt the child. A resource home is one which has been certified for foster care, with the intention of adoption when a child becomes available.

The child born Monday is the seventh Safe Havens infant to be received by Hamilton County Children's Services from area hospitals. The other six children have been adopted.

"The Safe Havens Program is working," Deters said. "Seven babies who might have been abandoned have been given to adoptive parents who really want them and can care for them. I commend the birth parents who did the right thing."

More information about the Safe Havens program is available by calling the United Way Helpline - 211 or by visiting www.jfs.ohio/safehavens/. Parents can also learn about adoption and other services that may be available to them by calling Help Me Grow, 1-800-755-4769.

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