

§ 7B-525. Social services response.

(a) A director of a department of social services who receives a safely surrendered infant pursuant to this Article has, by virtue of the surrender, the surrendering parent's rights to legal and physical custody of the infant without obtaining a court order. A county department of social services to whom an infant has been safely surrendered may, after the notice by publication set forth in G.S. 7B-526 has been initiated, apply ex parte to the district court for an order finding that the infant has been safely surrendered and confirming that the county department of social services has legal custody of the minor for the purposes of obtaining a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, a social security number, or federal and State benefits for the minor.

(b) The director of social services receiving the infant shall do the following in an expeditious manner:

- (1) Ascertain from a health care provider that the surrendered infant is, to a reasonable medical certainty, not more than 30 days old and without signs of abuse or neglect. If both conditions are not satisfied, the provisions of the Article do not apply and the director shall treat the infant as a juvenile who has been reported to be an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile.
- (2) Make an inquiry of the person who received the infant as a safe surrender whether the surrendering parent was provided with information in accordance with G.S. 7B-526 and document the response.
- (3) Notify law enforcement of the safely surrendered infant and provide law enforcement with information necessary to investigate through the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons and other national and State resources whether the infant is a missing child.
- (4) Contact the non-surrendering parent when their identity is known to inform the non-surrendering parent that the infant was surrendered.
- (5) Respond to any inquiry by a non-surrendering parent about whether their child was safely surrendered.
- (6) When a surrendering or non-surrendering parent seeks custody of the infant, arrange for genetic marker testing of that parent and the infant if there is uncertainty as to parentage.
- (7) After 60 days from the date of surrender, if the surrendering parent has not sought to regain custody of the infant and the infant is not placed with the non-surrendering parent, initiate a termination of parental rights for the surrendering parent under G.S. 7B-1111(a)(7).

(c) Where the non-surrendering parent's identity is known and the non-surrendering parent has been contacted and located by the director of the department of social services, the director shall place custody of the safely surrendered infant with the non-surrendering parent, and any custodial rights of the department of social services shall terminate only if all of the following apply:

- (1) There exists the rebuttable presumption the non-surrendering parent is the safely surrendered infant's parent through (i) the child's legitimation through marriage or (ii) genetic marker testing arranged by the director to establish parentage that indicates the probability of parentage is ninety-seven percent (97%) or higher.
- (2) The non-surrendering parent asserts their parental rights to their child.
- (3) The director does not have cause to suspect the infant is an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile due to the circumstances created by the non-surrendering parent.

(d) Where the identity of the non-surrendering parent is known by the director and the director has cause to suspect the infant may be an abused, neglected, or dependent juvenile due to

circumstances created by the non-surrendering parent, the director shall proceed as if there was a report of abuse, neglect, or dependency in accordance with G.S. 7B-302. The surrendering parent shall not be part of the department assessment conducted under G.S. 7B-302. If a petition alleging abuse, neglect, or dependency is filed with the district court pursuant to G.S. 7B-302, in accordance with G.S. 7B-401.1(b), the surrendering parent shall not be a party unless the court orders otherwise or a surrendering parent comes forward to regain custody of the child.

(e) If the surrendering parent seeks to regain custody of the infant, the provision of G.S. 7B-527(a) shall apply. (2023-14, s. 6.2(a); 2024-34, s. 6(a).)