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Sound bites on this topic are available at: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/audio.aspx>

Two Instances of Safe Haven Law on Sunday, October 5

Lincoln - Todd Landry, director of the Division of Children and Family Services for the Department of Health and Human Services, said there were two separate instances of use of LB 157, Nebraska's "safe haven" law, on October 5.

"We are just now beginning to gather information in these cases and our staff will continue to assess these situations," Landry said. "A 12-year-old boy from Douglas County was left at Immanuel Hospital in Omaha, and another 12-year-old boy was left at BryanLGH West in Lincoln late last evening."

This is the 7th and 8th instances and the 15th and 16th child left at a hospital under the law since September 13.

"I encourage parents who are having difficulty with their kids to reach out for help from family, faith-based organizations and other community services when they need support before taking this drastic measure," Landry said.

Legislative Bill 157, which went into effect July 18, prohibits prosecution when a child is left at a licensed Nebraska hospital. While they cannot be charged for abandoning a child, parents and guardians using Nebraska's "safe haven" law can be charged for other offenses. Courts are also likely to require parents and guardians to participate in parenting classes, family therapy, conflict resolution or other services in an effort to reunite youth with their families. Child support payments may be ordered while children are in state custody.

Information about local resources is available by calling 211 or local United Way organizations or going to http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/children_family_services_safehaven.aspx.

DHHS offices can also provide information about options and resources. To find your local DHHS office, go to <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/localoffices.aspx>.

Note: The DHHS Website has been updated today to show this use of LB 157.

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