

THE SAFE AT HOME ACT FAQ

Q. What is Safe at Home?

A. Safe at Home (SAH) is an address confidentiality program. It provides a substitute address, mail forwarding service, and confidential voter registration and absentee voting for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking to use on all public records.

Q. Do any other states have similar programs?

A. Yes, there are 35 other states that have address confidentiality programs (ACP).

Q. Who can apply to participate?

A. Any adult victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking; any person living in the same home with the victim, any minor child or children, or an incapacitated person who is in fear for his or her safety can apply to SAH. SAH participants must be Iowa residents. Eligible victims have taken some action with law enforcement against their offender, such as filing a complaint or seeking a protective order.

Q. How do participants apply?

A. Victims or survivors must complete application forms prescribed by the Secretary of State. The application can be accessed on-line at <http://safeathome.iowa.gov/pdf/application.pdf> and submitted by mail or e-mail, or via an application assistant through the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Abuse and the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Q. Where can participants use the substitute address?

A. City, county and state offices, such as city clerks, county clerks, county treasurers, schools, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services and other similar offices are required to accept the substitute address when presented with certification from a program participant. Private organizations requiring a mailing address must also accept the substitute address as the participant's legal address. The confidential address does not apply to real estate records.

Q. How does the program secure participants' contact information?

A. A secure computer database has been created by the Secretary of State's office to house all data provided by participants. All paper documents will be housed in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

Q. Who has access to application and contact information?

A. SAH program staff members (4) are the only ones with access to the participant database. Safe at Home is required to release the information to the Child Support Recovery Unit and to a court if directed by court order. Also, if the SAH program receives a valid law enforcement request, information will be released to the requesting officer.

Q. How will participants get mail?

A. When a participant's mail is received in the Secretary of State's office, it is forwarded to the participant's mailing address the same business day that it is received in the office. Participants must understand that mail could be delayed up to seven days.

Q. If my abuser is the parent of my children and he/she still has visitation rights, can I still apply for the program?

A. Divorced or separated individuals with children can participate in Safe at Home. We are working with the appropriate parties to develop a system to ensure that parents' visitation rights will be honored.

Q. If participants change their address or legally change their names, can they enroll?

A. Anyone who legally changes his or her name while participating in Safe at Home must notify the SAH program of the change. Failure to provide notification may result in termination from the program.

Q. How do participants register to vote?

A. Participants' voter registration applications / updates will be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office instead of their County Auditor. Participants' voter registration records will not be visible in the state voter registration system. All voter registration forms and absentee request forms should be mailed to SAH staff.

Q. Can participants vote in person on Election Day?

A. No. Safe at Home participants will have to vote by absentee ballot. Their ballot requests will be handled by the SAH program staff and the State Commissioner of Elections.

Q. Do participants have to pay to enroll in the program?

A. No. There is no enrollment fee and no other cost to the program participants. The program will be funded through a \$100 surcharge imposed on all persons convicted of domestic abuse and a \$50 surcharge on violations of protective orders.