

## THE SAFE AT HOME ACT AGENCIES' FAQ

### Q. What is Safe at Home?

A. Safe at Home (SAH) is an address confidentiality program. It provides a legal substitute address (combination of a street address and PO Box) for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking to use on all public records. Pre-existing public records can not be redacted.

### Q. Do any other states have similar programs?

A. Yes, there are 37 states that have address confidentiality programs (ACP). The Iowa program resembles the Missouri and Minnesota programs.

### Q. Who can apply to participate?

A. Any adult victim or survivor 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 and survivors have taken some action with law enforcement against their offender – such as filing a complaint, seeking a protective order or cooperating with a police report.

### 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 the United States Postal Service or via an application assistant through the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Abuse or the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

### Q. Where can participants use the legal substitute address?

A. City, county and state offices, such as city clerks, county auditors, county treasurers, schools, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services and other similar offices are required to accept the legal 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.

### Q. How can an agency or organization verify if a person is enrolled in SAH?

A. Participants may present their enrollment cards to verify participation. Agencies may request SAH to verify participation by e-mailing [SafeatHome@iowa.gov](mailto:SafeatHome@iowa.gov) or calling SAH at 515-725-7233. If you need to verify the district/county a participant lives in, the request must be made in writing on an official letterhead and mailed or e-mailed to our office.

**Q. Who has access to application and contact information?**

**A.** Only SAH program staff members (4) can access the participant database. Safe at Home is required to release the information to the Iowa 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. Will a state or local agency be notified when a participant is terminated from the program?**

**A.** The SAH program does not send notice to public or private organizations when a participant has graduated or is terminated from the program. Mail that is “returned to sender” may be determined to constitute program termination. Participants may also notify agencies through another change of address. Agencies and organizations can call or e-mail SAH staff at any time to verify participation of an individual.

**Q. How can state and local agencies be certain that participants will receive mail sent to them?**

**A.** When a participant’s mail is received in the SAH office, it is forwarded to the participant’s mailing address the same business day. This means that mail could be delayed five to seven business days.

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

**A.** Yes, however participants who legally change their names or addresses 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 are submitted to the state commissioner of elections, instead of to the county commissioners of elections. Participants’ voter registration records are not visible in the state voter registration system. Voter registration forms for SAH participants should be mailed to SAH staff.

**Q. Can participants vote in person on Election Day?**

**A.** No. Safe at Home participants must vote by absentee ballot. Ballot requests are handled by the SAH program staff and the State Commissioner of Elections. Absentee ballot request forms for SAH participants are available at <http://safeathome.iowa.gov>.

**Q. How do I serve notice on a SAH participant?**

**A.** The SOS serves as the agent of service for program participants. All served notices are forwarded to the participant via certified mail. Service is completed at the time the participant accepts service, not at the time it is received in the Secretary of State’s Office. Once service is complete the SAH staff notifies the server with a form stating when service was completed. If service is refused, the SAH program may terminate the participant.