

The Children's Hospital Los Angeles Safe Surrender Clinic is the first specialty, integrated-care clinic dedicated specifically to addressing the unique needs and challenges of children who were 'safely surrendered' by their biological parents. Our clinic directly serves the Los Angeles community of Safely Surrendered children (of any age), offering screening, evaluation, and guidance to better understand and address each child's unique needs based on perinatal risk factors or unknown aspects of their family history. We also serve as a resource for Safely Surrendered infants in other areas of California and beyond.

Our Evaluation: Our typical evaluation is an interdisciplinary integrated assessment conducted by our team of professionals. It consists of an initial pre-interview along with administration of various questionnaires. These results guide an in-person visit in which our team works with one another to better assess and understand the needs of the child. In some cases, there are concerning behaviors or developmental delays that the family hopes to better understand. In other cases, the child appears to be developing typically, but the family hopes for a deeper evaluation given perinatal risk factors or unknown aspects of their child's biological family history. Families are usually invited to participate when their child is about eighteen months old, but in some cases younger children or school age children may benefit from our assessment process. Visits typically take about two hours and results are provided at the end of the visit. Our clinic will help connect families to any recommended interventions. In addition to the in-person assessment, our clinic also provides more general consultation and is available to help address questions or concerns that may arise at any point in childhood or adolescence.

Our Team: Micah Orliss, Ph.D. is the founder of the CHLA Safe Surrender Clinic and a psychologist specializing in working with children exposed to trauma. Sheela Rao, M.D. is a pediatrician at CHLA with expertise in addressing the medical needs of youth in foster care. Oscar Donoso, Ph.D. is a psychologist specializing in assessing and treating the needs of infants and children in early childhood. Jennifer Jones, OTD is an occupational therapist with expertise in addressing the sensory needs and developmental challenges of young children.

Preventative Care and Early Intervention: Early childhood is a wonderful window of time in which children's brains are developing incredibly rapidly. The brain grows at an unprecedented rate in the first three years of life, which makes this the ideal time in which to offer 'preventative care' services. As the brain is experiencing such rapid growth, any positive and enriching supports can have an outsized influence on brain development and help to offset any risk factors a child might have experienced prenatally or in their early childhood. A preventative care approach works to offset identified risk factors through supportive interventions to 'prevent' a problem from developing. This philosophy underlies the work that we do at the CHLA Safe Surrender Clinic: we shouldn't wait for a problem to develop when we can do so much now!