

Beware of Fake Clinics

WATCH OUT for deceptive (anti-abortion) pregnancy centers. Their true purpose is to steer women away from abortion. Thousands of women have been harassed and upset by the anti-abortion politics of "crisis pregnancy centers."

"One person told me about their horrifying experience going to a fake clinic. The name was Open Door, so they expected it to be supportive of women's decisions regardless. What a nightmare. When the staff person/volunteer came out with the pregnancy test results, she literally ran over to us, "Congratulations - here's a gift for your new baby."

"Then they asked us what we wanted to do and my daughter and I said we decided the best thing for her to do was have an abortion and how much would that cost? The two ladies said 'please wait a minute' and left us ... They came back with a doll and ... scissors ... and said: 'this is what your baby looks like now and we want you to start cutting her up because that's what will happen if you get an abortion - so start cutting!' I grabbed her and threw the doll at those ladies and got out of there fast! I later found out it wasn't a real clinic..."
--excerpt from *Legal but Out of Reach* published by the National Network of Abortion Funds

What is a Crisis Pregnancy Center?

In small and large towns throughout the United States (and all over the Internet), anti-abortion groups have set up "crisis pregnancy centers" or "pregnancy counseling centers" or "pregnancy help centers." They are often located near high schools. These centers follow a format suggested by the Pearson Foundation that is deliberately designed to misinform and mislead young women.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) want to be the first contact a woman makes when she thinks she might be pregnant, **so they can talk her out of considering abortion.** They go by these names: Crisis Pregnancy Center, Pregnancy Aid, Birthright, Open Door, Pregnancy Counseling Center, Care Net, Life Choices, Pregnancy Resource Center, Life Center, First Choice, or First Way.

Anti-abortion centers offer free pregnancy tests and pregnancy counseling as a means to lure you in. BUT, usually they will not give you with the "pregnancy verification" paperwork that is needed to apply for social services or to schedule an abortion.

CPCs are listed in the yellow pages under "abortion alternatives" because they do NOT provide abortion. On the Internet they use deceptive names like prochoice.com, and pregnancycenters.org. Nearly all of these centers are

operated by churches or religious organizations. They refer to themselves as a "ministry."

Most will not give information by phone; they insist you come into their office and then they force you to watch anti-abortion videos while you wait. Women have reported waiting up to an hour for pregnancy test results, which should take only minutes.

Women describe being harassed, intimidated, given blatantly false information, and being forced to pray with the fake clinic staff. Their confidential information has been used against them. In some cases, women were followed home, mail and phone calls intruded into their homes, and young women's parents have been called.

How to Recognize Anti-abortion Centers

The Pearson Foundation manual, *How to Start and Operate Your Own ProLife Outreach Crisis Pregnancy Center*, urges anti-abortion counselors to give deceptive answers. For example, it cautions, "Do not tell the client that she is or is not pregnant." Instead, counselors are advised to only say whether test results are positive or negative.

Their office is filled with one-sided information.

They show shocking and misleading films and pictures of mutilated fetuses and stillborn babies. They won't let the woman leave until the end of the video, even when she realizes she has made a mistake going there.

They attempt to make women feel guilty.

They do not provide birth control services or factual information. The Pearson Foundation manual explicitly instructs counselors "never to counsel or refer for artificial contraceptives or sterilization." Instead, they preach abstinence.

Many of these centers perform ultrasound (also called sonogram) and make women look at the screen. But having medical equipment does not mean the personnel are medically trained or understand what the ultrasound shows.

IF you discover you are seeking help from an anti-abortion facility, protect yourself from further harassment. **Leave immediately and do not return.**

When you arrive at a professional clinic, be sure to tell them about your experience at the fake clinic and let them help you sort out the facts from the religious views or outright lies you have been told.

A Washington State resident unwittingly went to a fake clinic. After 2½ hours of answering their questions, they refused to give her the pregnancy test results on paper. She wanted the pregnancy verification so she could apply for a DSHS medical coupon to get coverage for abortion. They told her the wrong number of weeks regarding how far along her pregnancy was, and then kept calling her at home using the confidential information she gave them before she realized they were not a real clinic.

To Locate a Professional Reliable Honest Clinic:

- Do not go to the ones listed under "Abortion Alternatives" in yellow pages.
- Ask on the phone if they provide abortion procedures at that location. Avoid centers that refuse to give a straightforward answer.
- Be cautious when surfing the web. Often you will find anti-abortion religious-based websites disguised as pro-choice information. Keep searching for reliable information.
- Look for a clinic that says it provides abortion or birth control, not just abortion information.
- Avoid centers with ambiguous descriptions. Avoid clinics whose staff do not provide full, clear answers about their services. Ask friends or relatives you trust.

If you run a clinic or referral agency, carefully examine the list of centers you refer women to. Take off any that are fake. Cedar River Clinics offer FREE pregnancy tests in Renton, Seattle, and Tacoma.

For unbiased help if you are unsure about what you want:

- **Backline** - toll free talk line at 888-493-0092 where you can talk with someone as you explore your options
- **Pregnancy Options Workbook and Website** - at www.pregnancyoptions.info
- **Get a list of pregnancy symptoms** and help finding a real clinic. Call 800-772-9100 or see www.prochoice.org/pregnant/ami/index.html
- **Cedar River Clinics** – call 800-572-4223 to set up an Options Counseling appointment.

Legal Voice in Seattle supports legislation to make limited service pregnancy centers tell the truth about the services they do and don't offer. Phone 206-682-9552 www.legalvoice.org

If you live in Washington State, we want to hear about your experience to help expose the lies and stop fake clinics. Please contact us at the phone numbers below.

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