

# DESIGNED to DECEIVE

A STUDY OF THE CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTER INDUSTRY IN NINE STATES

## Pennsylvania State Findings

- ▶ The Alliance Study identified **156 crisis pregnancy centers** in Pennsylvania.
- ▶ There are currently **17 abortion care clinics** left in the state; five provide only medication abortion.

### *Pennsylvania Directly Funds CPCs*

Twenty-seven (17.3%) of the state's 156 crisis pregnancy centers are publicly funded through Real Alternatives, an organization plagued by allegations of misuse of public funds, waste, and lack of transparency. So far, Pennsylvania has diverted more than \$100 million into CPCs.

Pennsylvania is also one of a handful of states that double-funds CPCs by diverting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), safety-net funds earmarked for pregnant people and children in poverty, to Real Alternatives.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, Pennsylvania siphoned these funds away from children and gave it instead to anti-abortion activists, despite stashing away billions of dollars from relief funds related to the pandemic, which exacerbated children's poverty.<sup>2</sup> Thanks in part to public funding, the disparity between the number of CPCs and abortion providers in Pennsylvania is significantly higher than the national average.

### *Most Common Services Offered by CPCs in Pennsylvania*

The services provided by Pennsylvania CPCs align with data from other states. The most common services are free/earned goods (92.3%), pregnancy testing (88.5%), and "counseling" (82.1%). Among entities that receive public funding via Real Alternatives, 100% offer pregnancy testing, 96.3% offer free/earned goods, and 96.3% offer "counseling."

### *CPCs in Pennsylvania Promote False & Biased Medical Claims*

Most CPCs in Pennsylvania (64.7%) make false and biased claims, a rate that aligns with CPCs in other states examined in the Alliance Study. The Study defined as false or biased any medical claim that was untrue or unsubstantiated, misstated or selectively cited to factual information, or used gratuitous or graphic language instead of clinical terms. Most (63%) of CPCs in the Real Alternatives network make false and biased medical claims.

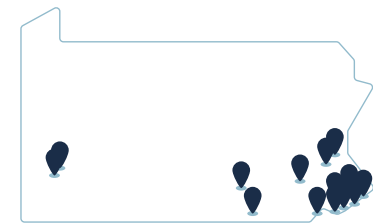
**Pennsylvania CPCs make deceptive and misleading claims on their websites,** including that they have no agenda and provide full and unbiased information to support a pregnant person's choice. Some CPCs in Pennsylvania deceptively use the word "choice" or "options" in their name, and many falsely claim to be the only resource that will provide unbiased information to pregnant people about all their options.

### *CPCs in Pennsylvania Promote "Abortion Pill Reversal"*

In Pennsylvania, 32.0% of CPCs provide, refer for, or promote "abortion pill reversal" (APR). APR is the unrecognized practice of injecting or prescribing high-dose progesterone for pregnant people who have taken the first medicine in the two-step protocol for medication abortion in an attempt to stop ("reverse") the abortion. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists calls APR "unethical" and "not based on science."<sup>3</sup> This rogue practice has been called "unproven and experimental" in *The New England Journal of Medicine* because neither the safety nor effectiveness of APR has been proven in clinical trials.<sup>4</sup>

IN PENNSYLVANIA, CPCs  
OUTNUMBER ABORTION  
CARE CLINICS BY

**9:1**



*"We are just beginning to reckon with our country's long, shameful history of racist and sexist medical abuse. And now we're seeing a coordinated effort to promote a new form of racist and sexist experimentation on pregnant people."*

— CHRISTINE CASTRO,  
Women's Law Project

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OPTION ULTRASOUND	APR: ABORTION PILL REVERSAL	LIFE SUPPORT	BREATHE, AFTER ABORTION CARE
MEN'S PROGRAMMING	PITTSBURGH ESSENTIAL SPEAKERS	STD AWARENESS	

After you take the first pill, it's like the lights go out and Satan says, "Gotcha!"

Many women immediately regret their abortion decision. Within a three-day window of time, women can reverse their abortion pill affects with this safe, simple protocol.

▶ Screenshot from Women's Choice Network CPC, Pittsburgh: <https://mypregnancycenter.org/our-programs/>

### Publicly Funded CPCs in Pennsylvania Promote "Abortion Pill Reversal" at Higher Rates

Many CPCs in Pennsylvania promote unethical experimentation on vulnerable pregnant people in collusion with state government. Among CPCs supported with public funding via Real Alternatives, 40.7% refer for APR.

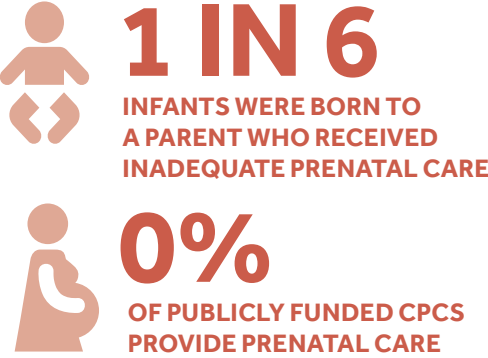
### Most CPCs in Pennsylvania Do Not Provide Medical Care

The vast majority of CPCs in Pennsylvania (98.7%) provide no prenatal care; only 29% even make referrals for prenatal care. Most Pennsylvania CPCs provide no well-person care (99.4%) or referrals (87.2%). None of the CPCs in Pennsylvania provides contraception.

### Publicly Funded CPCs in Pennsylvania Provide No Prenatal Care

None of the publicly funded CPCs in Pennsylvania provides prenatal care. Forty-eight percent of publicly funded CPCs refer for prenatal care.

IN PA:



### CPCs & the Maternal Mortality Crisis in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's maternal mortality rate skyrocketed 21.4% between 2013 and 2018. Black people accounted for 126 (23%) of pregnancy-associated deaths in Pennsylvania from 2013 to 2018 while only accounting for 14% of births in Pennsylvania during this time period. Nearly half of the people that experienced a pregnancy-associated death from 2013–2018 did not receive adequate prenatal care.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, one in six infants born in Pennsylvania were born to a parent who received inadequate prenatal care.<sup>6</sup>

### Extensive Allegations of Misuse of Public Funds by CPCs

In 2017, a Pennsylvania official denounced Real Alternatives for "skimming" public funds.<sup>7</sup> In July 2020, a watchdog group called Campaign for Accountability filed a 27-page public complaint alleging widespread misuse of public funds, waste, and lack of transparency by Real Alternatives, the organization that has received over \$100 million in public funding to oversee a network of Pennsylvania-based CPCs since the 1990s.<sup>8</sup>

In 2019, Real Alternatives was defunded in Michigan in the wake of a similar public complaint. They continue to operate in Indiana as well as Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania refunded Real Alternatives in FY 2020–2021.

### Recommendations

- Stop funding crisis pregnancy centers with public dollars.
- Invest in evidence-based programs that promote healthy pregnancies, childbirths, and postpartum periods.
- Pass the Patient Trust Act to prevent the Commonwealth from forcing health care practitioners to provide medically inaccurate and/or medically inappropriate information.
- Require all schools to provide inclusive, medically accurate, and evidence-based sex education.
- Pass legislation promoting equitable access to contraception.
- Pass legislation disallowing CPCs from teaching "sexuality education" in public schools.
- Amend the Pennsylvania Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law to permit private enforcement even when no commercial transaction is involved.

1. Emily Crockett, "States are Using Welfare Money to Fund Anti-Abortion Propaganda," Vox, October 3, 2016, <https://www.vox.com/identities/2016/10/3/13147836/states-tanf-welfare-crisis-pregnancy-centers-Wormer>, "Mapping Deception."

2. For more information, contact [info@womenslawproject.org](mailto:info@womenslawproject.org).

3. "Facts Are Important: Medication Abortion 'Reversal' Is Not Supported by Science," *American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.acog.org/advocacy/facts-are-important/medication-abortion-reversal-is-not-supported-by-science>.

4. Daniel Grossman and Kari White, "Abortion 'Reversal' — Legislating without Evidence," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 379, no. 16, October 2018: 1491, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmp1805927>.

5. "Pregnancy Associated Deaths in Pennsylvania, 2013-2020," Pennsylvania Department of Health, December 2020, 5 Pregnancy Associated Deaths 2013-2018 FINAL.pdf (pa.gov).

6. "Pennsylvania Quick Facts: Prenatal Care," March of Dimes, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/ViewTopic.aspx?reg=42&top=5&lev=0&slev=4#:~:text=Quick%20Facts%3A%20Prenatal%20Care&text=In%20Pennsylvania%20in%202019%2C%2077.8.late%20or%20no%20prenatal%20care>.

7. Marie McCullough, "Dispute Questions Anti-Abortion Group's Use of Taxpayer Dollars," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 16, 2018, <https://www.inquirer.com/philly/health/real-alternatives-audit-department-human-services-taxpayer-money-20180316.html>.

8. "Press Releases, State Oversight, Themis Project: Watchdog Calls on Pennsylvania Officials to Terminate Contract with Anti-Abortion Group for Wasting Millions of Taxpayer Dollars. Violating Pennsylvania Law," Campaign for Accountability, July 14, 2020, <https://campaignforaccountability.org/watchdog-calls-on-pennsylvania-officials-to-terminate-contract-with-anti-abortion-group-for-wasting-millions-of-taxpayer-dollars-violating-pennsylvania-law/>.