

## CPCs & Access to Health Care

CPC tactics to expressly delay patient access to abortion care are well documented.<sup>134</sup> An openDemocracy journalist who enrolled in online Heartbeat International trainings for CPC peer counselors recently reported, “They ... taught me how to discourage and delay women from accessing abortions and even emergency contraception.”<sup>135</sup>



If you are considering visiting an abortion clinic, we want you to know what this choice could mean to your future. You don't need to make this decision right away. Slow down and allow time to think. Don't let anyone tell you that you have to have an abortion. Pregnancy care centers exist to offer you choices and information. There are risks to most abortion procedures. Be sure that you understand these risks because many abortion clinics are not required to inform you of this before performing an abortion.

► Confidence Pregnancy Center, Salinas, CA; <https://pregnancysalinas.com/faqs/>

People seeking abortion care, as well as abortion providers, report experiences of CPC tactics delaying access to medical care.

*“[A CPC] lied to me, suggested I commit suicide, and threatened to call the police if I left their building. I can’t believe they’re allowed to interact with pregnant people, let alone receive money from the state government to do so. Going to a CPC endangered my health, my life, and fundamentally affected the way I look at myself – and prevented me from seeking care from other providers.”*

—M. C., CPC client, Minnesota



*“I went to Care Net because I was afraid that I was having another ectopic pregnancy and I wanted to find out about all of my options, including medication abortion, like the Care Net website says. A ‘nurse’ gave me a pregnancy test and then put me in a room by myself. A volunteer came in and ‘counseled’ me against having an abortion. She asked if I was religious and if I believed in God. She gave me information about Hell. And then she prayed for me. They refused to do an ultrasound exam on me that day but scheduled one in two weeks’ time. Given my history, I could not delay for two weeks, so I went to a provider where I was given a thorough examination and it was determined that a medication abortion was the right choice for me.”*

—A.N.V., CPC client, New Mexico



*“I have had colleagues who report that patients who visited CPCs were specifically instructed by the CPC not to seek care from a provider until much later in their pregnancy. Put simply, far from enhancing patient care, CPCs create unnecessary risk.”*

—GLENNA MARTIN, MD, Board-certified family medicine physician, Washington



Research has also documented CPCs using ultrasounds to legitimize false information about the stage of fetal gestation<sup>136</sup> and mislead clients into believing they are too far along to legally obtain an abortion.<sup>137</sup> CPCs in the Alliance Study also posted obviously manipulated ultrasound imagery on their website.<sup>138</sup>

*“I had one patient who reported an ultrasound result to me that did not match her actual gestational age. My patient was contemplating abortion and thought she had ‘plenty of time’ to make her decision based on the ultrasound she had received at this CPC. But when we did an ultrasound, the patient was much closer to the gestational age limitation on abortion in our state than she had thought.”*

— **GLENNA MARTIN, MD**, Board-certified family medicine physician, Washington



A robust body of research indicates that a person who seeks but cannot obtain abortion care may experience a range of harms including mental, physical, and socioeconomic consequences.<sup>139</sup> Relatively little is known, however, about the health consequences of visiting a CPC on pregnant people who are not considering abortion.

While preventing access to abortion is the primary mission of CPCs and people considering abortion are the main targets of CPC marketing efforts,<sup>140</sup> the surprising reality is that most people who go to CPCs intend to carry their pregnancies to term and are primarily searching for free pregnancy tests and infant supplies, especially diapers.<sup>141</sup> In one study, 87% of CPC clients reported going to the center for diapers, and 44% for baby clothes/items.<sup>142</sup>

**MOST CPC CLIENTS ARE SEARCHING FOR FREE GOODS:**



**87%**  
OF CPCS CLIENTS GO FOR DIAPERS



**44%**  
OF CPCS CLIENTS GO FOR BABY CLOTHES/ITEMS

Do CPC delay tactics postpone access to prenatal care? If so, what are the health consequences for pregnant people visiting CPCs before or instead of accessing medical care?

CPCs specifically target people seeking abortion care, yet disproportionately affect people who intend to carry to term. The unknown consequences of this reality for maternal and public health is cause for national concern, especially in light of expansion of CPC networks across the country. Future research should specifically investigate the impact of visiting a CPC on maternal health and birth outcomes.