

“Non-Diagnostic” Ultrasound

Various described on their websites as “non-diagnostic ultrasound,” “limited obstetrical ultrasound,” “option ultrasound,” or simply “sonogram” (the technical term for the image produced by ultrasound), the CPC industry offers free ultrasound to lure clients through the door and coerce their pregnancy decision-making.

National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA), an evangelical Christian law firm for the anti-abortion movement, has promoted the provision of ultrasound technology at CPCs for many years. NIFLA claims, “more than 80% of abortion-minded mothers choose life after they see their unborn baby via ultrasound” which gives clients “the opportunity to see the wonderful handiwork of the Creator.”⁷⁸

Research shows viewing an ultrasound does not typically change a person’s mind about abortion or elicit a singular effect on the patient’s emotions.^{79 80}

The anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ+ organization Focus on the Family has also steered the use of ultrasound technology by CPCs, and financially subsidizes equipment and training, as long as the CPC is “located in a community with a high abortion rate.”⁸¹ Eligibility factors include that CPC locate near abortion providers.⁸²

The American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM) condemns the use of ultrasounds for any non-medical purpose: “The use of ultrasound without a medical indication to view the fetus, obtain images of the fetus, or identify the fetal external genitalia is inappropriate and contrary to responsible medical practice.” AIUM characterizes the use of ultrasound for “bonding” purposes as “keepsake imaging” and discourages the practice.⁸³

The CPC industry also relies on the provision of ultrasound to signal medical legitimacy.

According to the global CPC network, Heartbeat International: **“In essence, there is no such thing as a non-diagnostic ultrasound.** [Emphasis theirs.] Even if you are using an ultrasound machine for the singular purpose of showing the client her baby, you are likely conducting a diagnostic test that suggests a medical procedure. Because of this, you are functioning as a medical facility when you perform an ultrasound ... Does that mean you have to become a state licensed medical clinic? Not necessarily.”⁸⁴

The anti-abortion industry’s false claims regarding the effect of viewing an ultrasound on pregnancy decision-making have also been used as justification for legislation mandating patients undergo medically unnecessary forced ultrasound before an abortion procedure. Some of these laws require abortion providers to display the screen and describe the image in detail, regardless of the patient’s preference.⁸⁵

► For more information see the Alliance Study companion resource, *Global, National & Regional Anti-Abortion Organizations Supporting CPCs* at alliancestateadvocates.org/publications

“When a physician begins caring for a new patient who is pregnant, it is common practice to obtain any prior ultrasound scans the patient received from outside health care facilities. The existence of crisis pregnancy centers has made it difficult for physicians to ascertain whether these prior ultrasounds are reliable. I have had patients who have obtained ultrasounds at CPCs who were unaware they were not receiving medical care from a real health care facility. I am not aware of any other area of medicine in which these problems exist. There are no ‘crisis broken bone clinics’ that take an X-ray and assure you that you’ll be fine if you simply wear a sling. CPCs take advantage of that lack of knowledge to provide all of the form of a doctor’s office, but none of the function.”

— **Glenna Martin, MD**, Board-certified family medicine physician, Washington

