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How to Identify Fake Clinics

This resource is designed to help you figure out whether a pregnancy centre is anti-choice – i.e, a “fake clinic”.

Often, the websites or promotional literature of these “crisis pregnancy centres” (CPCs) make it appear they offer all options in an unbiased manner. Many are Christian ministries operating from a traditional moral perspective on sex and pregnancy, but they may give no indication of that.

(Here are [ARCC's lists of anti-choice groups including CPCs.](#))

It can be hard to identify a fake clinic when browsing its website or social media. We'll list terminology and other typical red flags to watch out for, and also what you probably *won't* find on a fake clinic's website.

If you're unsure, compare it to a genuine sexual health centre or abortion clinic, which tend to have the following on their websites and literature:

- Professional, complete information about procedures and policies
- Links and resources to help you decide for yourself
- Resources from a variety of mainstream services, including government supports and LGBT resources
- Inclusive information on gender identity or orientation
- Fun, sex-positive messaging

Names

Fake clinics often have names similar to abortion clinics. They may also “co-locate” near real reproductive health clinics, hoping to misdirect potential clients to themselves.

Some words in the names of organizations to watch for:

- Beginnings
- Birthright
- Choice, choices
- Crisis
- Hope
- Life
- Options
- Pregnancy care
- Pregnancy support

Of course, legitimate clinics use some of the same terms (which is the point), so the presence of one or two of these is not a definite indicator of an anti-choice stance.

Language and Bias

In general, anti-choice language tries to mimic feminist and human rights language. Fake clinics claim to be unbiased, value- or judgment-free, and non-discriminatory. Some centres claim to be pro-women. They offer help, support, services, and counselling – often on “all options”. But many websites have few details about their services. They also tend to use subtle methods of manipulation to invoke fear or worry. For example, they may stress that the targeted person is “not alone”, or mention that abortion is “life-changing.”

Fake clinics often have biases and misinformation related to abortion and contraception. For example, they will focus on negative aspects of abortion, such as “post-abortion distress” or other alleged side effects, but never mention the risks of full-term pregnancy and childbirth. They often claim that condoms have very limited efficacy, that other contraception doesn’t protect against STIs, and that some contraceptives work as abortifacients. A typical statement for emergency contraception is: “These medications can work by stopping ovulation, blocking sperm from joining with an egg, or preventing a fertilized egg from implanting (some may consider this an early abortion).”

Check the Links or Resources section of the website. They may link to religious groups, or include information and links to sites that make false claims about the risks of abortion, including breast cancer, infertility, suicide, depression, and substance abuse. Sometimes their donation page gives clues on who funds them.

Below are lists of things to look for. A multiple presence likely indicates an anti-choice stance.

Words and Phrases

- Abortifacient
- Abortion loss
- Abstinence
- Accurate information
- Adoption “the loving option”
- Baby
- Birth parent
- Child, children
- Choice
- Christ, Christian-centred
- Compassionate
- Emotional
- Faith-based
- Father, dad, men
- Grief
- Healthy relationships
- Mother, mum, mom
- Non-judgmental
- Post-abortion, followed by the word stress, distress, trauma, syndrome, grief, recovery, healing, or support
- Post-abortive
- Pre-born
- Pregnant? Alone? Afraid?

- Peer counsellors
- Recovery
- Religious references
- Sexual integrity
- Unborn
- Values

Imagery

- Babies
- Mothers and babies
- Pregnant bellies, usually near term
- Pregnant women near term
- Young teens
- Sad people

Services

- Adoption
- Appeals to men, “Dads” programs
- Maternity/baby clothing (they may also operate food banks, or offer food baskets)
- Parenting programs (e.g., “Earn while you learn”)
- Post-abortion support
- Pregnancy or STI tests (but cannot offer follow-up with contraception, condoms, or treatment)
- Sex education (examples of program names: “Sexual Integrity”, “WAIT training” “Take Charge” “S.H.A.R.E.”, “STAND program”)

Omissions

- Contraception information
- Downsides of adoption or parenting
- Health risks of full-term pregnancy
- Use of the words fetus or embryo
- Links to abortion or contraception providers
- Gender identity and orientation information (language and pictures only recognize male/female and heterosexuality)
- Supports for 2S/LGBTQQIPAA people
- Resources to help you decide without coming into the centre
- Safer sex information
- Sex positive language

Disclaimers

- “We do not refer for abortion or contraception.”
- “We are not a medical facility. We do not provide or refer for abortion
- “We provide accurate information on all options but do not provide abortion referrals.”