



Southwest Women's Law Center
505.244.0502 | Fax 505.244.0506
info@swwomenslaw.org
www.swwomenslaw.org

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Crisis Pregnancy Centers and New Mexico October 2018¹

If you are pregnant and looking for information, you deserve honest information about all your options. You can get that information and the medical care you need at a real clinic or from a real health care provider, but you will not get it at a crisis pregnancy center or fake clinic. Their mission is to discourage women from getting abortions and access to birth control.²

What is a “Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC)” or “Face Clinic”?

Crisis pregnancy centers may look like medical clinics; they may even use the word “clinic” in their names. Some are located close to real abortion clinics. They advertise that they provide pregnancy counseling and information about abortion and pregnancy, and they usually offer free pregnancy testing. Their websites and advertisements often use the same words and pictures as real abortion clinics. People working there may be wearing scrubs and stethoscopes, and there may even have a nurse or other health care provider on staff or volunteering. Some even provide limited ultrasounds or testing for sexually transmitted infections. But they do not provide comprehensive reproductive health care, accurate medical information, and they do not provide abortions or referrals for abortions; most don't provide any medical care at all. In fact, they might actively discourage people from accessing abortion and birth control.³

In New Mexico, the prevalence of CPCs is particularly harmful to women and families as these organizations target young women, women living in poverty, women of color, and women without access to health care and education. There are approximately 34 crisis pregnancy centers currently operating in New Mexico⁴, the majority of which are located outside the major metropolitan areas

¹ This information is adapted and expanded upon Legal Voice's brochure to include NM information. Thank you to Legal Voice!

² Know Before You Go: Crisis Pregnancy Centers Want You to Stay Pregnant, January 2018, Legal Voice, available at <http://www.legalvoice.org/know-before-you-go>

³ Id.

⁴ Data based on ExposeFakeClinics.com available here <https://exposefakeclinics.squarespace.com/cpc>, and internal research based on internet research.

where there is limited access to health care. Some are receiving state funding or resources from local hospitals.

How to spot a crisis pregnancy center and how to find a real health care facility:

Look for the words “pregnancy options,” “pregnancy resource center,” or “pregnancy care center” in your internet search results, on advertisements, and on their signage.

Some other things to look for:

- Statistics without a citation, citation to an unreliable source, or misrepresentation of data from a reliable source
 - For example, Care Net ABQ states, “[i]t is important to know that several studies have shown over 80% of women electing abortion have stated that they were coerced or pressured into that decision.” However, nowhere on its webpage does it provide a citation to where these “several studies” were taken. When following the “NM Statistics,” and “Center Statistics” links, none of the information provided on pregnancy rates, sexually transmitted infections, and abortion rates comes from a reliable source, such as the Centers for Disease Control.
- Many CPCs will claim to have “licensed medical staff,” but fail to provide the identities or credentials of that staff or if they are volunteers. If they do have paid medical staff and they should be clear and honest about what services they offer.
- Offering a “free pregnancy test” or “free ultrasound” are also common promises from CPCs.
- Check out their website and social media platforms. Several CPCs organize and support anti-choice extremists and/or protest legitimate health care facilities.
- Advertisements that include statements like “Pregnant? Scared? Need Help?” are tactics CPCs use to target vulnerable people.
- If you call before you walk in, ask what services they provide and about their staff. If they won’t explain who they are and what they do, they might be a CPC.
- Is the organization affiliated with Carenet? Carenet a large, faith-based crisis pregnancy center organization operates throughout the country and they have affiliates all over New Mexico. These organizations do not provide comprehensive or medically accurate sexual and reproductive health information. You may have seen their advertisements on city buses, at bus stops, and on billboards and tv.
- Will they refer you to a clinic which will provide you with abortions? Not all legitimate health care facilities will provide abortion care but they will refer you to someone that does. CPCs will not refer clients for abortion care and will often stand in the way of that information.
- Are you required to go through counseling to get family planning services? Legitimate health care providers do not stipulate medical care on counseling.

- Does the center offer post-abortion counseling, counseling for “post abortion syndrome,” or “post-abortion stressors?” These are not medically recognized mental health issues associated with abortion care.
- Do they claim that vaccinations are harmful? Some CPCs claim that vaccinations in general, including the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination⁵ are dangerous despite clear recommendations, backed by extensive research from medical professionals in support of vaccination.⁶
- Does the center offer a “Sexual Integrity Program?” Sexual integrity programs are based on biblical references and other religious ideology not on evidence based medicine and public health policies.
- Call before you walk in and ask about their services over the phone. Legitimate health care facilities will provide you with answers to your questions and will not pressure you to make an appointment.
- Be your own advocate!
 - Get a referral from someone you trust
 - Start with a resource that you know offers accurate information and can guide you in the next steps. Planned Parenthood or UNM Hospitals are a good option.

What are some of the risks associated with going to a crisis pregnancy center?

- Delay in adequate medical care
 - Typically, adolescents, people living in poverty, and women without access to education and adequate health care do not suspect being pregnant as quickly as older, higher income, and more highly educated women.⁷ As a result of this delay in prenatal care, younger and lower-income women are unlikely to reach-out for pregnancy information until they are further along in their pregnancies.⁸ Because CPCs are not medical facilities, they are not required to give accurate medical information or services. This lack of proper information impacts a woman’s decision to terminate her pregnancy or otherwise determine how to proceed with her health choices.⁹ This is problematic not only because it removes a woman’s right to choose but increases the likelihood that a woman will miss the time in which a abortion is legal and more affordable.
- Receiving misleading or false information

⁵ Vaccine Safety, Center For Disease Control, last visited September 13, 2018 available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaccines/hpv-vaccine.html>

⁶ Vaccines & Immunizations, Center For Disease Control, last visited September 13, 2018 available <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html>

⁷ Joanne D. Rosen, *The Public Health Risks of Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, 44 PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH 201, 201-205 (Sep. 2012).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

- CPCs make false claims that abortion increases your risk for breast cancer, infertility, or suicide. They also falsely claim that abortion leads to increased mental health problems like depression or increased drug and alcohol use. These claims are false and harmful. Abortion is an incredibly safe and effective medical procedure and delays and misinformation put people at risk.¹⁰
- CPCs often provide false or misleading information about birth control, sexually transmitted infections, adoption, and/or abortion. CPCs are not medical facilities and are not regulated by the government so there are few, if any, consequences for lying to clients. Many CPCs are run by religious organizations that promote abstinence-only and engage in shaming of people seeking services for reproductive and sexual health.¹¹

CPCs Target Young Women¹²

“In 2017, a Mississippi branch of CareNet...advertised on the back of the tickets for a high school graduation ceremony. CPCs have also advertised in school newspapers, and have located close to colleges and universities, and offer free pregnancy tests to exploit their proximity to young women who may lack the resources or exposure to tell the difference between a CPC and a clinic offering abortion care.”¹³ CareNet in New Mexico uses its mobile unit to target students at both UNM and CNM and advertise in areas with high student traffic.

In 2016, the largest demographic of New Mexican residents living in poverty were females between the ages 25-34.¹⁴ Immediately following this age group were females between 18-24, followed by females aged 35-44.¹⁵

In 2013, pregnancies among 15-19-year-old females in New Mexico was the highest in the nation, with 62 pregnancies for every 1,000 women.¹⁶ This is higher than the average across the country, where adolescents account for about 15% of unintended pregnancies.¹⁷

¹⁰ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Board on Health Care Services; Committee of Reproductive Health Services Assessing the Safety and quality of Abortion care in the U.S., *The Safety and Quality of Abortion Care in the United States*, 2018, available at <https://www.nap.edu/initiative/committee-on-reproductive-health-services-assessing-the-safety-and-quality-of-abortion-care-in-the-us> (last visited October 26, 2018)

¹¹ Crisis Pregnancy Centers Lie: The Insidious Threat to Reproductive Freedom, <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cpc-report-2015.pdf>

¹²What are Crisis Pregnancy Centers?, National Abortion Federation, available at <https://prochoice.org/fake-health-clinics/>

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Data USA, New Mexico (sourced by the Census Bureau), available at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-mexico/>

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *State Facts About Unintended Pregnancy: New Mexico*, GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE (2017), available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/up-nm.pdf> (last visited October 26, 2018).

¹⁷ *Id.*

This means that young women in our communities need accurate and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and CPCs are taking advantage of that need.

CPCs Target Low-Income Women¹⁸

Out of New Mexico's CPCs, at least 18 of them are in counties with a median household income lower than \$46,748, the state average.¹⁹ and 84% of CPCs in NM are located outside of major metropolitan areas which means they are targeting women who already lack access to adequate medical care. In 2014, "151,950 New Mexic[an] women aged 13-44 were in need of publicly funded family planning services." With the lure of inexpensive pregnancy tests, "young, poorly educated or poor women are likely to be drawn to crisis pregnancy centers' prominent advertisements for their free services."²⁰

CPCs Target Women of Color

CPCs "are employing deceptive and manipulative practices to reach women of color, with the singular goal of decreasing abortions in minority communities. In doing so, the CPCs are showing profound disrespect for women of color and the reality of their lives. Rather than helping minority communities, CPCs may leave women of color in worse situations and may harm their health."²¹ In 2016, 62.2% of New Mexico's population was non-white.²² Of the 19.8% New Mexicans in poverty, 67.5% of these individuals are non-white.²³ Additionally, the counties in which CPCs are located, all have median incomes lower for their populations of color than they are for the corresponding white population.²⁴

In terms of birth rates, the 2016 New Mexican average for teens ages 15-19 was 29.4 births per 1,000 females. However, these numbers varied by race and ethnicity. While Non-Hispanic white teens from 15-19 years of age had an average of 17.8 births per 1,000, Hispanic teens averaged 34.2*, Native American teens averaged 35.2*, and Black or African-American teens had 24.6* pregnancies correspondingly.²⁵

¹⁸ Saporata, Vicki, Targeting the Vulnerable: Crisis Pregnancy Centers Deceive, April 1 2008, Rewire News available at <https://rewire.news/article/2008/04/01/targeting-the-vulnerable-crisis-pregnancy-centers-deceive/>

¹⁹ See Elinor Rushforth, CPC Strategy Attorney Work Product, SOUTHWEST WOMEN'S LAW CENTER at 3-5 (CPC's in New Mexico are located in Carlsbad, Farmington, Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Moriarty, Los Lunas, Roswell, Portales, Gallup, Clovis, Ruidoso, Socorro, Los Alamos, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Alamogordo, Angle Fire, and Taos); Data USA, New Mexico, Income by Location (sourced by the Census Bureau, 2014), available at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-mexico/>.

²⁰ Rosen, *supra* note 1.

²¹ Crisis Pregnancy Centers are Targeting Women of Color, Endangering their Health, National Women's Law Center,

²² Data USA, New Mexico (sourced by the Census Bureau), available at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-mexico/>.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Teen birth rate, ages 15-19, by race and ethnicity*, KIDS COUNT DATA CENTER, https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5548-teen-birth-rate-ages-15-19-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=33&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/870,573,869,36,868,867,133/4862,4828,4827,4887,5322,4900/1212_9 (averaging the number of births out of every 1,000 females).

New Mexican women of color fare worse than Non-Hispanic White women in receiving late or no prenatal care. In 2015, an average of 10% of New Mexican pregnant women did not receive prenatal care until the third trimester of their pregnancy or had no prenatal care. In the same year, 13%, 7%, 10% and 11% of American Indian women, Asian & Pacific Islander women, Black or African American women, and Hispanic or Latina women respectively had late or no prenatal care.²⁶

According to the New Mexico Department of Health, “[d]isparities by maternal race and ethnicity persist, with babies born to Black or African American women experiencing the highest infant mortality rates (11.8 per 1,000 live births in 2013-2015). The next highest rate is among Hispanic women at 8.1 per 1,000 live births.”²⁷

By targeting women of color, CPCs are delaying access to comprehensive and accurate medical care and information. This is information women need to make decisions about their health for themselves and their families. Because women of color already fare worse in terms of maternal and infant health, any disruption or misinformation is dangerous and can greatly impact their health and wellbeing.

How can women find the help they need?

- Be your own advocate! Don’t be afraid to ask questions before going to an appointment. Call with questions or visit their website and social media pages.
- Get a referral from someone you trust
- Start with a resource that you know offers accurate information and can guide you in the next steps.
 - UNM Health System
 - Online: <https://hsc.unm.edu/health/patient-care/family-planning-reproductive-health/index.html>
 - By phone: 505-925-4455
 - Email: unmmgcrh@unmmg.org <unmmgcrh@unmmg.org>;
 - To find the **Planned Parenthood** health center nearest you, learn more about their services, or book an appointment, go to their health center locator
 - Online: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center> and enter your zip code or state
 - By phone: 1-800-230-7526

²⁶ *Births to women receiving late or no prenatal care by race and ethnicity*, Kids Count Data Center, available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9078-births-to-women-receiving-late-or-no-prenatal-care-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=33&loct=2#detailed/2/33/false/573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18/10,11,9,12,1,13/18064,18065>.

²⁷ New Mexico Department of Health, Health Equity in New Mexico, January 2018 available at <https://nmhealth.org/publication/view/report/2045/>.

- **Backline:** Operates a toll-free talkline to provide judgment-free support for pregnancy options, pregnancy loss, abortion, adoption, parenting, infertility, or other reproductive decisions and experiences.
 - By phone: 1-888-493-0092
 - Online: <http://yourbackline.org/find-support/>
- If you are in financial need, you can apply for state medical coverage. Go to <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/LookingForAssistance/apply-for-benefits.aspx>.

Here are some ways you can help expose crisis pregnancy centers in New Mexico!

- 1) File a complaint: [File a complaint with the NM Attorney General's Office](#) with the Consumer and Family Advocacy Services!
- 2) Review a fake clinic online. Write an accurate, honest review of your experience.
- 3) Share your story: If you have gone to a CPC by accident thinking you were going to a real health care provider, been lied to about the status of your pregnancy, received false or misleading information about abortion, or experienced discrimination based on your race, sex, gender identify, or sexual orientation, please share your experience with us if you are comfortable. Personal stories are a powerful tool to expose what is happening in these fake clinics. Please call 505-244-0502 or email: info@swwomenslaw.org.