



*magazine*

Photo Illustration by Courtney Walston





# Crisis Pregnancy Centers:

What are they and what do they do?

By Courtney Walston

You’ve probably seen their advertisements on bus benches and billboards and in newspapers around your community, usually with phrases like “Pregnant? Free tests” or “Pregnant and scared? You have options” paired with a phone number or a web address. Often times, they also advertise that they provide free STD testing as well. Little do women know that when they step into a Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC), they’re being preyed on. CPCs or “pregnancy resource centers” are institutions that seek out women with unintended pregnancies who may be considering abortion as an option. Their primary motivation is to dissuade women of having an abortion and try to convince them that adoption or keeping the child is the best option. These types of centers are not to be confused with legitimate sexual health centers, such as your local family planning or Planned Parenthood. There’s a HUGE difference between the two types of centers. When I say that women are being preyed on when they walk into a CPC, I mean it almost literally. Take this University of Northern Colorado (UNC) student’s experience, for example. She walked into a CPC called The Resource Center in neighboring Greeley, Colorado with her phone recording audio in her pocket and a concealed cup of urine from a friend who was

pregnant so that she got a positive pregnancy test. Her description of what transpired is truly invasive and uncomfortable. She’s quoted in the above article as saying that if a woman was pregnant and scared, that the experience would have been totally overwhelming. When I use the phrase “preyed on”, the crux of it is that these centers are taking advantage of the fact that scared, vulnerable women who suspect they may be pregnant are going into these clinics thinking they’re going to get help and shown ALL their options when in reality, they’re being bombarded with biblical references about adoption and shown videos of how a surgical abortion is done as a fear tactic.

Danielle Parker, a Colorado State University Masters student studying English Education, says that after doing her own research, she finds the idea of CPCs terrifying. “Being in a position where you need STI testing or need access to a pregnancy test and health care is already such a vulnerable position,” Parker said. “To prey on someone in that state, especially for the furthering of anti-abortion rhetoric, is absolutely disgusting”. In the above Colorado Sun article, the UNC student is also quoted as saying that The Resource Center “poses a serious medical risk to students at UNC” due to the lack of legitimate medical advice that is distributed. When I write that CPCs are a potential danger to women, this is what I’m referring to. There are actual testimonials from a handful of people that have had experiences with The Resource Center in Greeley. A woman by the name of Victoria (her name was changed for anonymity purposes) wrote about how a few days after her appointment at The Resource Center, she actually looked at the pamphlets that they gave her and was astonished that they are able to publish and distribute such literature. She wrote that they expressed how sex before marriage is a sin, reasons to not have sex and stigmatizing and misleading information about STDs and STIs. She was a UNC nursing major and compared them side-by-side to her textbooks and asked herself, “how can they publish this?” Another testimonial follows a

woman named Hannah (name also changed for anonymity purposes) who wrote about how insensitive, invasive, and judgmental her experience was with the woman that was handling her appointment at The Resource Center. She wrote that the woman continually pressed on her about her religious affiliation (of which she had none) and that the woman kept prodding her about her past of sexual abuse, which made her extremely uncomfortable. She ended up walking out the appointment after growing more and more agitated. Now, you may be thinking, “well, these women knew what they were walking into when they went into an anti-abortion clinic”. That’s actually not the case. The biggest contributor as to why CPCs are predatory and dangerous is their deceptive nature. As I pointed out in the first paragraph, CPCs advertise and present themselves vaguely and that’s 100 percent intentional. They use flashy words in their advertising, such as “pregnant”, “testing” and the flashiest of them all, “free”. When the word “free” is used in advertising, especially in a college town where students don’t have a lot of disposable income, it’s likely to draw more people in. I also want to note that quite a few CPCs go by titles that don’t clearly state that they’re an anti-abortion clinics that have religious affiliations, The Resource Center being an example. Moving closer to home, there are suspicions that there are CPCs in the Fort Collins area. The most notable that I’ve come across in my research is called The Alpha Center. Though their website makes note that they’re a “Christian medical clinic”, some students think that they’re still being deceptive in their presentation, as noted in the above linked Rocky Mountain Collegian article.

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— Danielle Parker  
CSU English Masters Student

**Characteristics of a CPC:**

- 1) More than likely has the word ‘life’ or a variation of it in the clinic name
- 2) Use of predatory advertising tactics
- 3) Religious affiliation
- 4) Majority do not actually provide medical care

**My personal experience**

To make the discussion of CPCs a little more personal, I want to establish that I’ve actually been to one before and I had quite an interesting interaction that I’ll never forget. My interaction with the executive director of a CPC in my local area was not under normal circumstances, as I was tasked to go there to speak with them about advertising for the student newspaper I was a part of. So, to clarify, I was not at a CPC for any services or counseling, only business. I’d rather not name the center, as that newspaper may still work with them and I don’t want to jeopardize their advertising agreement. Alright so here’s the story. I showed up at the center and was directed to the office of the executive director. Now, I want to note that when I showed up there, I knew where I was and I was expecting (and hoping) that the interaction with this woman would be brief. I would go through my script about ad rates, she’d tell me what she wanted and I’d be on my merry way. I was wrong. I was subjected to a rather uncomfortable, 20-minute one-sided conversation about how their



mission was to get Christian “boots on the ground” to do away with Planned Parenthood, how a child is a blessing and a woman who is pregnant (intentionally or not) shouldn’t be scared. She also rattled

“**After having that interaction, I can understand the feelings that those women had in the aforementioned testimonials.**”

on about god and bible verses. When I tell you that I almost drew blood in the palm of my hand with my fingernails. Mind you, I’m probably the most pro-choice person anyone has ever met, so I about screamed. Everything ended up fine: I got the ad contract, but I was LIVID when I left.

If you’d like a chuckle, I realized that when I was sitting in that office, I was wearing a t-shirt that said “the future is female” on it, so I’m sure the woman picked up that I’m a feminist. It was totally unintentional, but so hilariously ironic.

After having that interaction, I can understand the feelings that those women had in the aforementioned testimonials. I wasn’t even there for their services and was wildly uncomfortable. So, if you’ve been asking, “are these clinics really as awful as these women make them seem?” ...yes, yes they are.

And you can take not only their word for it, but mine, too.

If you’re wanting to know if there are CPCs in your area, use this website to search it. Just type in your city, state or area code and press enter. And make sure to stay safe out there and pay attention to where you go to get your sexual health advice and care.

***To find CPCs in your area, just scan the code below with your phone camera:***

