

More than 700,000 California women become pregnant every year and one-half of these pregnancies are unintended. At the moment they learn that they are pregnant, thousands of women remain unaware of the public programs available to provide them with contraception, health education and counseling, family planning, prenatal care, abortion, or delivery.

In recent years, clinics that seek to counsel clients against pregnancy termination have become common throughout California. These clinics are often referred to as a crisis pregnancy center, (CPC). Although some CPCs are licensed to provide various medical services to pregnant women, most CPCs are not.

Pregnancy decisions are time sensitive, and care early in pregnancy is important, however low-income women often have the least amount of awareness of the types of services they are eligible for and may have even less awareness of how to access these services. Thus making them most susceptible to visiting an unlicensed facility. It is vital that pregnant women know when they are getting medical care from licensed professionals. Unlicensed facilities that advertise and provide pregnancy testing and care must advise clients, at the time they are seeking or obtaining care, that these facilities are not licensed to provide medical care.

Some CPCs openly acknowledge, in their advertising and facilities, that they do not provide pregnancy termination services, emergency contraception or refer clients to other providers of such services but unfortunately there are still many CPCs that seek to mislead women contemplating these services into believing that their facilities offer any type of family planning services.

CPCs often purchase "pay per click" ads in online search services such as Google for terms such as "abortion" so that persons searching for pregnancy termination services will see a link and advertisement for the CPC at the top of the results page, making it easier for someone searching for information to find them. In addition, they may advertise on billboards and mass transit facilities where potential clients may become aware of their existence.

Most clients do not come to a CPC as a result of a referral from a medical professional. It has been documented that CPC clients seeking information regarding options to terminate a pregnancy are commonly experiencing emotional and physical stress and are therefore especially susceptible to false or misleading elements in advertising by CPCs. These circumstances raise the need for regulation that is more protective of potential consumers of pregnancy center services. Some CPCs offer sonograms by unlicensed technicians. If a woman who has had an ultrasound mistakenly thinks she's had actual prenatal care, she may not go elsewhere for real care.

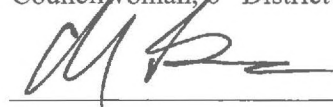
The City respects the right of limited services pregnancy centers to counsel against pregnancy termination if the centers are otherwise informing clients of what services they offer. However if women choose to terminate a pregnancy and are misled and delayed by the false advertising of CPCs the cost of providing more invasive and expensive options will fall on the government, which ultimately provides the medical services of last resort. When a woman is misled into believing that a clinic offers services that it does not in fact offer, she loses critical time in the decision making process. The City has an interest in protecting residents from false and misleading advertisements.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the CLA and City Attorney report within 30 days, on what other jurisdictions are doing to limit the deceptive practices of pregnancy crisis centers across the country, including recommendations on how we can limit deceptive advertising within the City of Los Angeles.

PRESENTED BY:


NURY MARTINEZ
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SECONDED BY:



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