

SIDEWALK COUNSELING GUIDE

SUGGESTIONS FOR SIDEWALK COUNSELING IN FRONT OF CLINICS



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SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNSELING IN FRONT OF CLINICS

This short guide offers practical advice for sidewalk counseling in front of abortion clinics and serves as a starting point for counselors new to this ministry.

OVERALL

- Always be peaceful, prayerful and helpful.
- Start with a prayer to the Holy Spirit – ask for guidance regarding what to say and do.
- Set a positive, helpful image for pro-lifers. Smile and speak peacefully, and never yell or become angry. (You may need to speak up to be heard, but do not yell.)
- Remember, we are there to help mothers, fathers and workers just as much as unborn babies.
- Support and help the other pro-lifers at the clinic – we are a team.
- Sign up for time slots on any official schedule – help to maximize your impact.
- If a scheduled sidewalk counselor is working, let them take the lead in counseling the women – we do not want numerous people talking to the women at once.
- Have an attitude of expectation when you ask someone to come and talk to you. People do what sounds normal and expected, not pleading and desperate.
- Focus on sidewalk counseling – this is not the time to socialize or evangelize.
- Be prepared.
 - Know your goals when speaking to someone.
 - Have your literature and know your literature – determine what you will point out in your literature, and what you will say to walk someone through it.
 - Know what help is available in the area, what services are offered, and when.
- Have something to say that you can fall back upon at any time
 - “God loves you and your baby”
 - “We’ll be praying for you”
 - “Come back out and talk to us anytime – we’re here for you”
- Do not be discouraged – turnaways are infrequent, but God uses our words, prayers, and efforts in powerful ways we cannot immediately see.

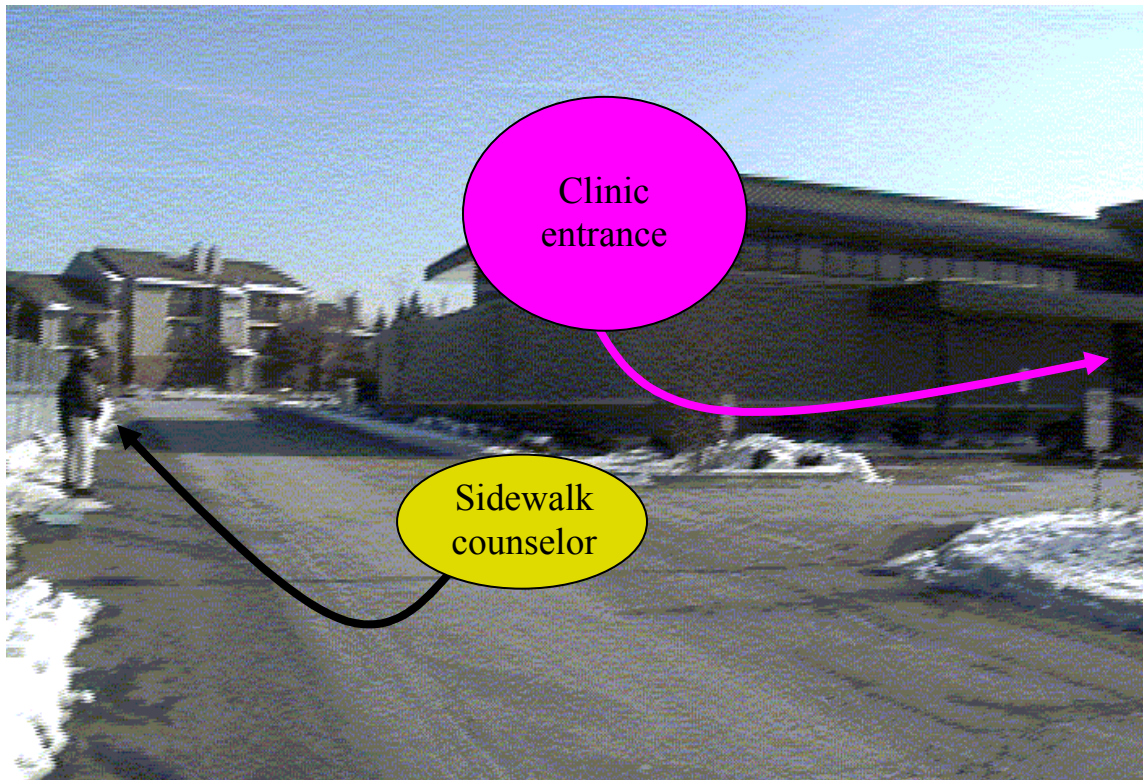
LEGAL¹ AND SAFETY

- Always follow the law and the directions of police officers (even if you disagree with what they are asking you to do).
- Never block a person or car at any time.
- Do not cross onto clinic property at any time, ***even if a woman or clinic worker invites you.*** Ask them to come to you.
- You can use cameras for your safety, but do not photograph the women entering the clinic unnecessarily. ***Never*** use images/cameras to scare, shame or embarrass anyone and ***never*** distribute recognizable images of those going to or working for the clinic.
- Watch out for traffic at all times.
- Report any threats or acts of violence to the police immediately. The safety of others praying and counseling at clinics depends on your willingness to report such activities – stopping such incidents early prevents them from growing into something more dangerous.
- Bring pen and paper to jot down any necessary notes (e.g., names of police officers if they are ever called).
- Prepare for weather: layered or waterproof clothing, gloves, sunscreen, bottled water, umbrellas, hand warmers, boots, etc.

¹ While this guide is believed to be accurate at the time of printing, none of the information should be construed as legal advice. Please consult with a lawyer if you have questions regarding legal matters.

POSITIONING

- Sidewalk Counselors (SWCs)
 - The sidewalk counselor generally stand where they can minister to the women and couples entering the clinic while maintaining some distance from any others (e.g., prayer partners) to avoid the appearance of “crowds”.
 - If prayer partners or other pro-lifers are standing too close, ask them kindly to give you more space so you can effectively counsel the women.
 - Your prayers are needed in addition to counseling – pray when you have the opportunity.
- Prayer Partners
 - Prayer partners generally stand where they are visible by the public and can monitor the sidewalk counselors.
 - Prayer partners should maintain some distance from the sidewalk counselor – a “crowd” can intimidate the women we hope to counsel.
 - Do **not** approach or interrupt a sidewalk counselor when they are actively counseling/talking to someone – if uninvited, joining them or interjecting into the conversation only disrupts the counseling that is underway.
- Graphic Pictures
 - Please do not display graphic pictures in the sidewalk counseling or prayer partner areas – these pictures can discourage women from speaking to the counselors.
 - If someone insists on displaying graphic pictures, respectfully ask them to keep some distance from the sidewalk counselors.



A sidewalk counselor outside of an abortion clinic – make sure to stay on public property.



Prayer partners and sidewalk counselors serving outside of a clinic.



Sidewalk counselors reach out to women entering a clinic.

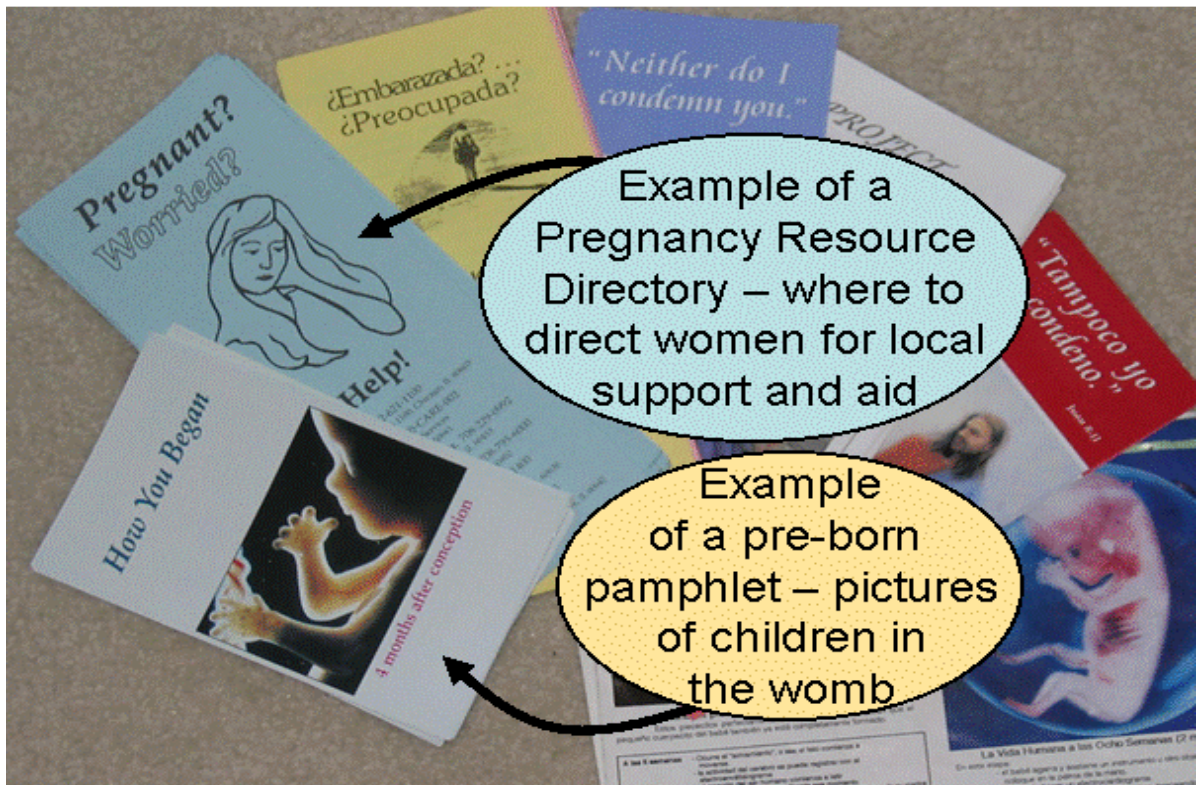


A sidewalk counselor offers pro-life literature to a woman going to the clinic.

LITERATURE

The counseling examples in this guide assume that you have literature to share. While many forms of pro-life pamphlets and literature are available for sidewalk counseling, the scenarios below reference two basic forms of pro-life counseling materials:

- 1) Pregnancy Resource Directory
- 2) Pamphlet with pictures of pre-born babies



Examples of pro-life literature to use while sidewalk counseling.

- Pregnancy Resource Directory
 - A pamphlet with addresses and phone numbers of local pro-life centers that assist women with unexpected pregnancies.
 - Provides a list of services and aid available at the centers.
- Pre-born Babies Pamphlet
 - Pictures of babies in the womb – can see face, arms, fingers, etc.
 - “Nice” pictures that show a woman what her little child looks like.
 - a.k.a. “PreBorn Pamphlet” in this guide.

SCENARIOS

The scenarios below cover a number of situations encountered at abortion clinics. The scenario descriptions provide basic goals to achieve, suggestions on how to proceed, and examples of what to say.

SCENARIO #1: CARS DRIVING INTO THE CLINIC

- Goals
 1. Give them literature on abortion and pregnancy resource centers
 2. Ask a woman seeking any “service” to go to a pro-life pregnancy resource center
- Gesture to offer literature
 - **Do NOT block the car.**
 - “This information is for you.”
 - “My name is Joe/Jane. These pamphlets are for you.”
- General Counseling – we’re here to help
 - “There are so many people willing to help you. Here, let me show you the assistance available at local pregnancy resource centers.” (review Pregnancy Resource Directory with them)
 - “We can call this pregnancy resource center and schedule an appointment – it’s free.” (point to list on Pregnancy Resource Directory, and circle closest one with a pen)
 - “Many women don’t want to be here, but feel there is no one to help them – what assistance do you need?”
- General Counseling – your baby is a person
 - “This is a picture of what your baby looks like right now.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
 - “You are a great looking couple – you know how beautiful your baby must be.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
 - “Your little son loves you and is counting on you right now.”
 - “Your little daughter has a beating heart, and she loves you with all of it.”
- If they decide to drive into the clinic parking lot
 - “We’ll be out here praying – please come back and talk to us anytime.”
 - “You can come back out and talk to us – we’ll be here for you.”
 - “Please remember, God loves you and your baby.”
- If they decide to turn-away from the clinic
 - “God Bless You. We’ll keep you and your baby in our prayers”
 - Provide literature. This affirms their decision and can help a friend.
 - If possible, get name and contact information (e-mail or phone number) and provide contact info as well. Follow-up in the next couple of days to ensure she found the assistance she needs.
 - If available, provide a gift bag with toys or baby clothes for newborns.

SCENARIO #2: WOMEN ENTERING THE CLINIC

- Goals
 1. Ask her to come over and talk to you
 2. Give her literature on abortion and pregnancy resource centers
 3. Ask a woman seeking a clinic “service” to go to a pro-life pregnancy resource center
- Ask her to come and talk to you.
 - If she is already on clinic property: Speak up (without yelling) so she can hear you.
 - If she is already on clinic property: In a gentle, welcoming way, gesture for her to come and talk to you.
 - “We’re here to help you – please come over and talk to us.”
 - “Please come and talk to us – it’s OK.”
 - “You can talk to me – it will only take a minute.”
 - “We’re organized to help you.”
 - “We’ve helped many women just like you – please come and talk to me.”
- General Counseling – we’re here to help
 - “This information is for you.” (hand pamphlets to them)
 - “There are so many people willing to help you. Here, let me show you the assistance available at local pregnancy resource centers.” (then review Pregnancy Resource Directory with them)
 - “We can call this pregnancy resource center and schedule an appointment – it’s free.” (point to list on Pregnancy Resource Directory, and circle closest one with a pen)
 - “Many women don’t want to be here, but feel there is no one to help them – what assistance do you need?”
 - “Just take the time to get another opinion. This is the most important decision of your life – you owe it to yourself to at least talk to the women at the crisis pregnancy centers. You can always reschedule your appointment here – the clinic is not going to turn down your money later.”
- General Counseling – your baby is a person
 - “This is a picture of what your baby looks like right now.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
 - “You are a great looking couple – you know how beautiful your baby must be.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
 - “Your little son loves you and is counting on you right now.”
 - “Your little daughter has a beating heart, and she loves you with all of it.”
- If they decide to go back into the clinic
 - “We’ll be out here praying – please come back and talk to us.”
 - “You can come back out and talk to us – we’ll be here for you.”
 - “Please remember, God loves you and your baby.”

- If they decide to turn-away
 - “God Bless You. We’ll keep you and your baby in our prayers.”
 - Provide literature. This affirms their decision and can help a friend.
 - If possible, get name and contact information (e-mail or phone number) and provide contact info as well. Follow-up in the next couple of days to ensure she found the assistance she needs.
 - If available, provide a gift bag with toys or baby clothes for newborns.

SCENARIO #3: FRIEND(S) OUTSIDE OF CLINIC

- Goals
 1. Give them literature for the mother awaiting an abortion
 2. Walk them through the literature, so they know exactly what to tell the woman inside the clinic
 3. Explain that they are impacted too
- Ask him/her to come and talk to you
 - Speak up (without yelling) so he/she can hear you.
 - In a gentle, welcoming way, gesture for him/her to come and talk to you.
 - “We’re here to help you – please come over and talk to us.”
 - “Please come and talk to us – it’s OK.”
 - “You can talk to me – it will only take a minute.”
 - “We’re organized to help you.”
 - “We’ve helped many people – please come and talk to me.”
- General Counseling – we’re here to help
 - “This information is for your friend inside – please give this to her.” (hand pamphlets to them)
 - “There are so many people willing to help your friend. Here, let me show you the assistance available at local pregnancy resource centers.” (then review Pregnancy Resource Directory with them)
 - “Your friend inside can call this pregnancy resource center and schedule an appointment – it’s free.” (point to list on Pregnancy Resource Directory, and circle closest one with a pen)
- Friends are impacted too
 - “You have a right to talk to her. You can go in and give her this information, and tell her that there are people who want to help her.”
 - “If she asked you to come, she is counting on you to help her now. You can tell her that other help is available for her.”
 - “This decision affects your soul too. You still have a chance to save that little child.

- “Simply ask her one last time if she wants to learn more about help available in the community – you both deserve one last chance to avoid this loss.”
- General Counseling – the baby is a person
 - “This is what that little baby looks like right now – that little girl is counting on you to save her life.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
 - “That little boy is counting on you right now – you’re the only one who can help him.”
- When they go back into the clinic
 - “We’ll be out here praying – please ask her to come out and talk to us.”
 - “You can both come back out and talk to us – we’ll be here for you.”

SCENARIO #4: SPEAKING TO THE DAD (BOYFRIEND/HUSBAND)

- “This is your own flesh and blood – your son is counting on you right now.”
- If he wants the baby, but says he has no influence: “Let your girlfriend/wife know that you want to raise your child with her – she may be waiting to hear that from you.”
- “You’re a dad, and your little girl needs you to be her hero. You have a right to go in there and talk to your girlfriend/wife – let her know that you want to visit one of these pregnancy resource centers for help.”
- “At the very heart of being a man is the instinct to protect your child and the woman you love.”
- If he says that he does not want to be a dad: “You’re *already* a dad. This is a picture of what your little son looks like right now.” (show PreBorn pamphlet)
- If he says it is her choice: “She may be looking to you for guidance. Tell her that you want to raise your child with her – you have a right to go in there and talk to her.”
- If he says that abortion is dangerous or hurting her: “If the two of you were in a burning building, would you tell her to lead the way and you’ll follow? Or would you take her by the hand and lead her out? If you think this is not good for her, let her know now.”

SCENARIO #5: WOMAN LEAVING THE CLINIC AFTER AN ABORTION

- ***Be extremely compassionate!*** Remember that abortion kills a child AND emotionally wounds the mother – the mother needs your love and concern, never any condemnation.
- Offer literature on post-abortion healing, such as a pamphlet for Project Rachel
- “This pamphlet has resources for healing after an abortion – we’ll keep you in our prayers.”

SCENARIO #6: CLAIMS OF RAPE/INCEST

- *Be Sympathetic! NEVER assume someone is not telling the truth about this.*
- “This is terrible... I am so sorry that happened to you.”
- Humanize the baby. We must sympathize with the woman, but we ALSO need to talk about the innocent child who did nothing wrong. When talking about the unborn child, it is helpful to refer to the baby as “your daughter”.
- “Your little daughter did nothing wrong. I know you are in pain over this, but she is counting on you now, and there are many people who are here to help you. Here, let me tell you about the pregnancy resource centers nearby.” (show Pregnancy Resource Directory) They have caring counselors and offer practical help.

SCENARIO #7: CLAIMS NOT HERE FOR ABORTION, OR IS HERE FOR OTHER SERVICES

- If the woman/dad/friend claims they are not here for an abortion, it is still helpful to get the information in their hands – sometimes they actually *are* here for an abortion, and distributing the literature is valuable, regardless.
- “There are far better places to get a pregnancy test/medical test/etc. We can make an appointment at any of these pregnancy resource centers for you, and none of them makes money through abortion.” (show Pregnancy Resource Directory)
- “Please take the pamphlet – you can give the information to a friend” (if they are here for an abortion, this gets the materials in their hands anyhow)

SCENARIO #8: CLAIMS HERE FOR BIRTH CONTROL

- “No matter why you are here, there are better alternatives than an abortion clinic. Do you really want to support a place that makes it money through abortion?”
- “Birth control has risks to your personal health. I have some information on that.” (show pamphlet on effects of birth control, and take opportunity to give other literature)

SCENARIO #9: PERSON IS ANGRY

- If someone is visibly angry or abusive, simply back down and do not pursue a conversation. Be pleasant and quiet. They may regret their anger as they wait or be amazed at your peace and come back to talk later. There is little value in agitating someone entering a clinic or in escalating a volatile situation.
- “God bless you. We’ll keep you in our prayers.” Only say something like this **if** they are not talking/ranting, and **if** it will not antagonize – the angrier someone else is, the more peaceful the pro-lifers need to be.



More information available at
www.sidewalkcounselor.com

Send comments/questions on this guide to swc@sidewalkcounselor.com