



CONSUMER ALERT

Understanding the difference between “crisis pregnancy centers” and licensed facilities that provide reproductive health care

MARCH 2024

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS UNIT
OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL
ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL KRIS MAYES

Consumer Alert:

Understanding the difference between “crisis pregnancy centers” and licensed facilities that provide reproductive health care

For patients considering or seeking abortion care, crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) can be an obstacle hiding in plain sight. CPCs are facilities that may look like licensed health centers and often hold themselves out as full-service medical clinics that can provide comprehensive reproductive health care. But really, CPCs are rarely licensed medical facilities. In general, the main goal of CPCs is to persuade patients not to have abortions.

WARNING: CPCS DO NOT PROVIDE ABORTION CARE OR COMPREHENSIVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE

- CPCs are nonprofit organizations that aim to discourage people from seeking abortion care and to persuade those seeking abortions not to access care.
- Although CPCs often portray themselves as medical clinics, most CPCs are not licensed medical facilities and may not be staffed by trained health care providers.
- CPCs often advertise a full range of reproductive health care services, but do not provide abortion care or abortion referrals, and usually do not provide birth control or other contraceptives.
- Because most CPCs are not licensed health care providers, CPCs may not be required to comply with HIPAA, may not protect your identity, and may sell your data to third parties.



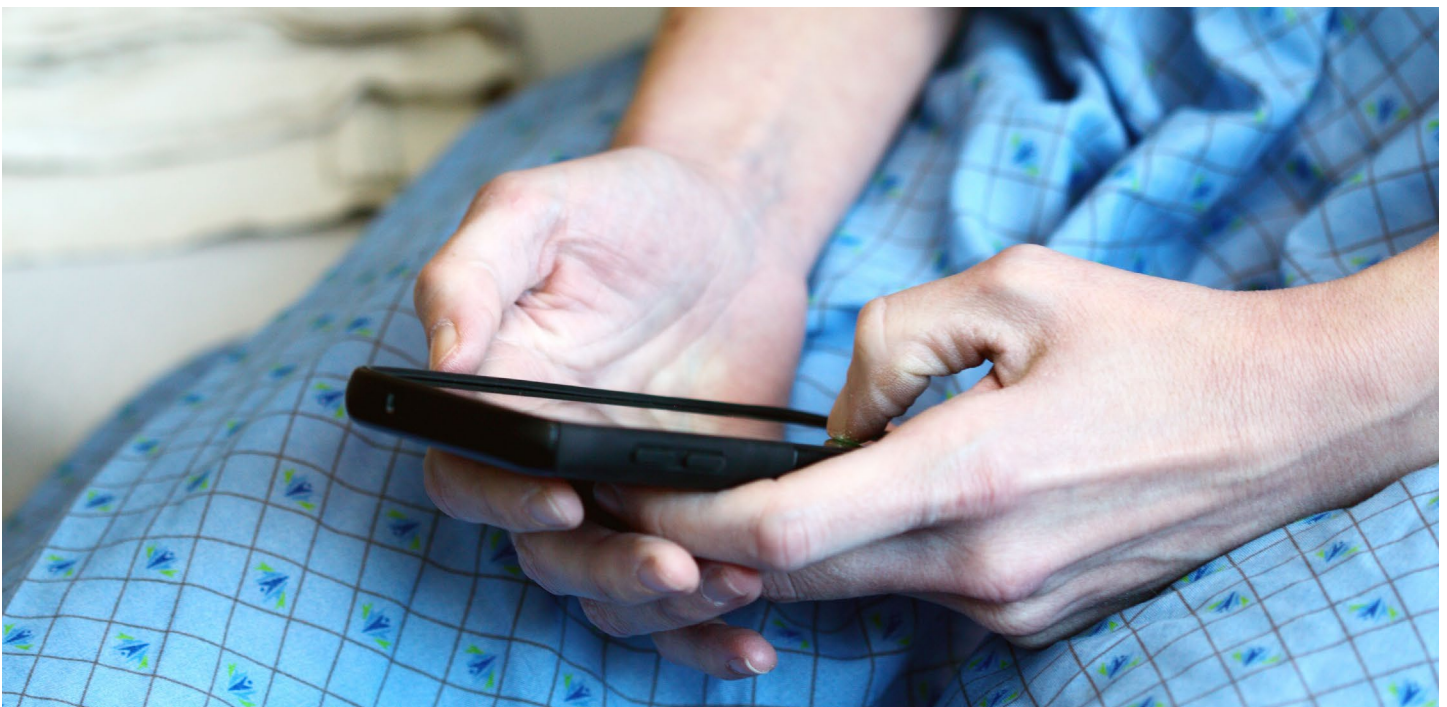


CPCs often use tactics meant to mislead and deceive patients

CPCs have been known to use a number of deceptive and misleading tactics to get patients in the door and delay the pursuit of abortion care.

For example, CPCs may:

- Advertise free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, and options counseling, leading patients to believe the CPC is a full-service clinic
- Deliberately locate near comprehensive health clinics that provide abortion care, leading to patients mistakenly enter the CPC instead of the licensed clinic
- Style their facilities and websites to look like full-service medical clinics, when in fact they generally are not licensed medical facilities and thus cannot provide medical services
- Operate with volunteers who sometimes wear white coats, so they look like medical professionals, but the volunteers usually have no medical background or training
- Advertise that they have medically trained staff, but that does not mean the CPC is a licensed medical facility that provides full-service reproductive health care





Know the red flags

As is generally the trend around the country, there are more CPCs than licensed abortion clinics in Arizona, so it's important to know what to look out for when you're seeking care. Keep the following in mind:

CPCS DON'T ADVERTISE THEMSELVES AS "CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS."

They sometimes call themselves "pregnancy resource centers," "pregnancy care centers," or "family centers" and "women's centers." They may also have the word "choice" in their names.

But that's not always true, so you cannot rely on the name of the clinic alone. Do not let your guard down just because a facility's name doesn't include "crisis center" language.

CPCS ALMOST NEVER SAY ON THEIR WEBSITES THAT THEY DO NOT PROVIDE ABORTION CARE OR REFERRALS.

If a facility does not clearly indicate on its website that it provides abortion care and referrals, or if staff will not clearly answer your questions about the services they provide, consider going somewhere else.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MISINFORMATION.

CPCs often spread fabricated information and debunked or misleading science about fetal development and abortion safety to discourage patients from considering abortion care.

If a facility tells you that abortions are dangerous and have many side effects, or they show you graphic imagery related to abortion care, consider going somewhere else.

IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING OR SEEKING ABORTION CARE, TIMING IS VERY IMPORTANT.

CPCs often use delay tactics to make getting an abortion more difficult, more expensive, or potentially unavailable under a state's law.

If a facility tries to delay or reschedule your appointments, tells you there is plenty of time to make a decision about your pregnancy, or is slow to respond, consider going somewhere else.



UNDER THE GUISE OF “COUNSELING,” CPCs SOMETIMES USE MANIPULATION AND PRESSURE TO PERSUADE PEOPLE OUT OF SEEKING ABORTION CARE.

If a facility is aggressive in pushing you towards adoption and away from abortion, or if you feel shame, judgment, or discomfort from your interactions with the facility’s staff, consider going somewhere else.

CPCs FREQUENTLY “MEDICALIZE” THE APPEARANCE OF THEIR FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS TO SEEM LIKE FULL-SERVICE MEDICAL CLINICS.

They may provide free ultrasounds without disclosing that the ultrasounds are non-diagnostic or limited in scope. CPC staff may read ultrasounds, but if they are not trained and licensed, they cannot accurately determine if a person is pregnant, the gestational age of the fetus, or whether there are real medical concerns for the pregnancy.

If a facility does not explain why an ultrasound is medically necessary or important, or does not provide clear and specific diagnostic information about the ultrasound, consider going somewhere else.

TO AVOID HAVING TO GET A LICENSE, A CPC MAY SOMETIMES TOE THE LINE OF WHETHER IT IS ARE TECHNICALLY PROVIDING SUCH SERVICES.

If CPCs provide medical services, health screening services, behavioral health services, or other health-related services (as those terms are defined by law), then they are legally required to obtain a license to do so. CPCs may do strange and confusing things trying to avoid licensing requirements and legal implications. For example, if a facility asks you to read your own pregnancy test, or asks you to self-administer your pregnancy test without their staff ever touching the test, consider going somewhere else.



Do your research and ask the right questions

If you are considering your options for reproductive health care, it's important to do your research and know what questions to ask to ensure you will receive accurate information and prompt care.

RESEARCH

Look up clinics online. Online reviews can sometimes provide helpful information about past patient experiences. Online reviews also can help you confirm whether a facility is a full-service clinic that will provide abortion care or a CPC.

CALL

Consider calling a clinic before making an appointment to make sure you are scheduling with a licensed clinic that provides comprehensive care.

CONFIRM

When you arrive for an appointment, confirm immediately that you are at the correct full-service, licensed clinic to make sure you have not mistakenly entered a nearby CPC.

QUESTION

As you research clinics, here are some questions to consider asking:

- ? Is the facility licensed? If so, what type of license?
- ? Will I be seen by a licensed provider? And if so, what type of provider (doctor, nurse, etc.)?
- ? Does the facility perform abortions or refer patients for abortions? What types of abortions are available (medication, surgical)?
- ? How much does the visit cost? Does the clinic accept insurance?
- ? Will the clinic keep my information confidential and not disclose my visit to anyone?

VALIDATE

The Arizona Department of Health Services is the body that regulates medical facilities in Arizona. If a facility claims to be licensed, it should be able to show you a copy of its license from the department.

- Search for a facility's licensing status and history [HERE](#).
- Search through a database of licensed medical facilities [HERE](#).
- Use AZ Care Check to search for licensed medical clinics and find out whether a clinic is licensed to provide medical, nursing, or health services [HERE](#).



Bottom line

You have the right to make deeply personal health care decisions that are right for you, without interference, coercion, deception or shame.

There are many resources online that can help you locate clinics and providers that offer comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care.

Be your own advocate and stand up for yourself to get the information you need.

If you suspect you are at a CPC, or if you feel uncomfortable or intimidated at any point—at any facility—you should leave. You are not obligated to continue the conversation.

File a complaint

You can file a complaint about a licensed or unlicensed facility with the Arizona Department of Health Services [HERE](#).

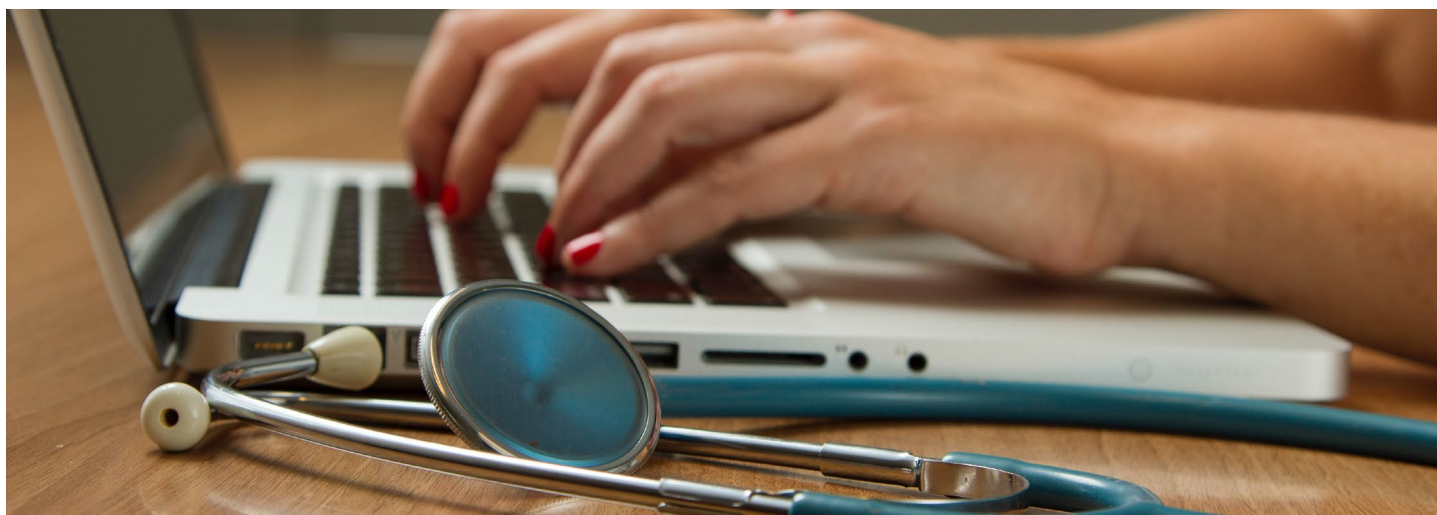
If you believe you've been the victim of fraudulent or deceptive practices when seeking an abortion or other reproductive health care services, you can file a complaint at: www.azag.gov/consumer.

If you need a complaint form sent to you, contact the Attorney General's Office. Bilingual consumer protection staff is available to assist and answer any questions.

Phoenix
(602) 542-5763

Tucson
(520) 628-6648

Toll Free
(800) 352-8431



KRIS  MAYES

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS UNIT
OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL
ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL KRIS MAYES

MARCH 2024