



# IN FOCUS

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts

## “JUST BECAUSE YOU’RE PREGNANT..”:

### Lies, Half Truths, and Manipulation at Crisis Pregnancy Centers In Massachusetts

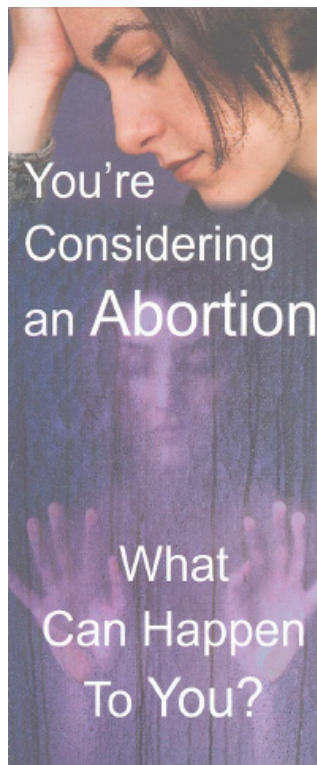
**1** **CPCs outnumber women’s health care providers three to one. And, location matters.** There are 30 separate locations with active CPCs, compared with nine specialty women’s health providers who publicly advertise that they offer abortion care.<sup>1</sup> Women in Western Massachusetts have access to six CPCs, Central Massachusetts has eight, and Southeast Massachusetts is home to six. In contrast, each of these regions has only one clinic providing abortion care. The ratio is somewhat better for women in the Northeast and Metro Boston, where women in each area can access three abortion providers compared to five CPCs.

**2** **CPCs design their online profiles and web-based advertising to mislead women seeking abortion care or non-biased pregnancy options counseling.** On Yellowpages.com and Superpages.com, CPCs in Massachusetts appeared in the top ten results for five out of six key search terms a woman facing an unintended pregnancy would likely use in the summer of 2010 and for three of the six in the spring of 2011. (The only thing that changed in between? NARAL Pro-Choice America conducted a nationwide campaign to challenge these online phonebooks to change their practices.)

**3** **CPCs misinform and deceive women about their health.** Three out of five CPCs visited provided incorrect or misleading information, as did three out of five of the websites. The most common medical falsehoods included linking abortion to breast cancer or severe emotional or psychological problems, often described as being akin to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Almost a third of CPCs visited also severely overstated the likelihood that having an abortion would undermine a woman’s future fertility.

**4** **Many CPCs misstate data about miscarriage and pregnancy complications.** Almost a third of the CPCs visited exaggerated miscarriage rates in an apparent effort to pressure our volunteers to get an ultrasound at the CPC or a related anti-choice facility, or to encourage them simply to delay making any decision about their pregnancies. Some went so far as to make the false claim that an ultrasound can predict if you’re going to miscarry.

**5** **CPCs prioritize their anti-choice agenda over a woman’s decision-making and health.** More than half of our volunteers reported that they felt pressure not to terminate the pregnancy during an in-person visit. CPCs overwhelmingly denied referrals for abortion care, and some even failed to discuss other options such as adoption or provide resources for prenatal care.



Brochure, distributed by a MA CPC

For more information, see reverse side or read our full report at

[www.prochoicemass.org](http://www.prochoicemass.org)

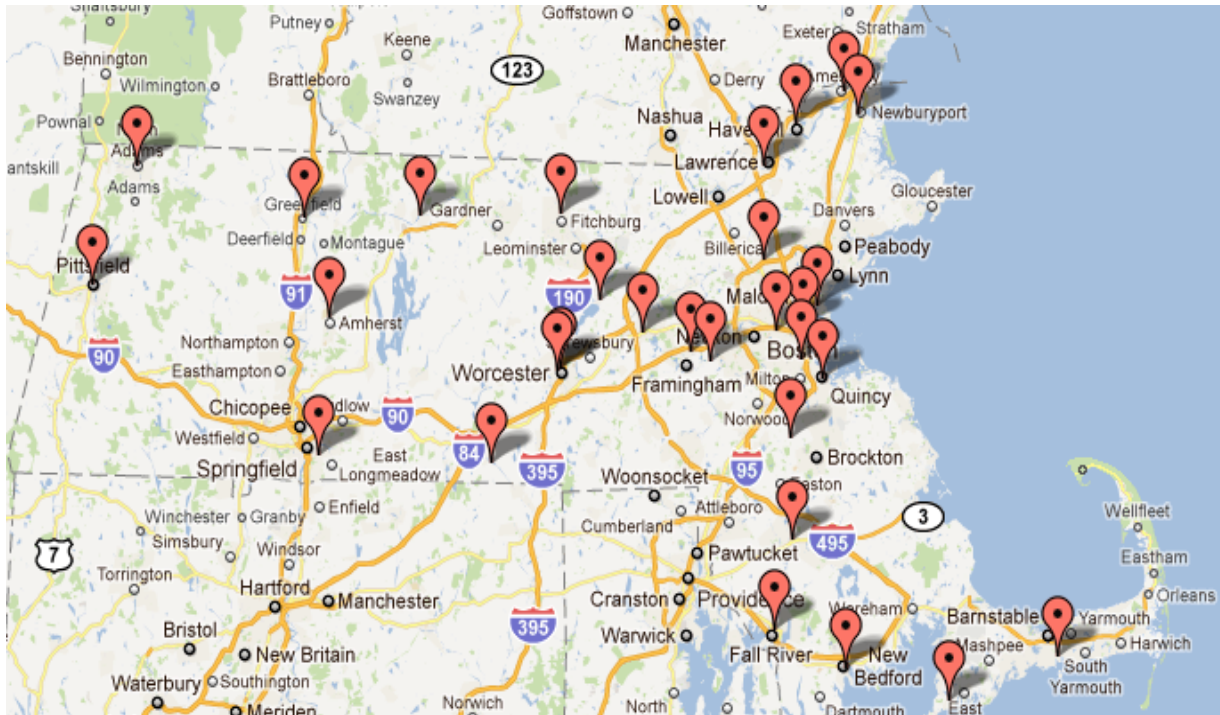
# “JUST BECAUSE YOU’RE PREGNANT...”:

## Lies, Half Truths, and Manipulation at Crisis Pregnancy Centers In Massachusetts

For years, we’ve heard the stories: A woman thinks she might be pregnant. Looking for counseling about her options and access to appropriate medical care, she stumbles across a “crisis pregnancy center” (CPC) that advertises free services. Once there, she’s shamed with anti-choice rhetoric, deceived by medical falsehoods, and delayed in getting health services by CPC staff and volunteers whose goal is to prevent her from considering abortion, regardless of her circumstances.

At NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, we believe that every woman deserves to make personal, private decisions about her pregnancy free of intimidation and coercion. Our mission is to protect and promote access to the full range of reproductive choices and health care options, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing safe, legal, accessible abortion.

Based on anecdotal evidence collected in the Commonwealth and research conducted nationally and in select other states, we were concerned that CPCs in Massachusetts might be undermining women’s timely access to true options counseling and pregnancy-related care. To better understand their impact, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts and the Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation decided to take a closer look at these CPCs.



CPC Locations in Massachusetts

We embarked on an in-depth investigation of crisis pregnancy centers in the summer of 2010 after the Commonwealth began issuing “Choose Life” license plates, which created a new revenue source for these anti-choice facilities. Over the course of a year, staff, interns, and trained volunteers worked to identify and map CPCs, researched their advertising tactics and sources of funding, catalogued the information on all of their websites, and conducted “mystery client” calls and in-person visits to 24 of the 30 CPCs currently operating across Massachusetts.

The upshot? These facilities undermine the health and well-being of women all across the Commonwealth. Their goal is to discourage women from considering abortion as a safe and appropriate option. Their tactics range from outright harmful to rather neglectful to simply biased. Their impact is to corrupt a pregnant woman’s decision-making process and delay her access to pregnancy-related care, whether she ultimately chooses abortion, adoption, or parenthood.