



FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION

**FEMINIST CAMPUS**

WORLD'S LARGEST FEMINIST STUDENT NETWORK

# Campaign to Expose Fake Clinics

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## WHAT ARE FAKE CLINICS?

Often referred to as “Crisis Pregnancy Centers” (CPCs), fake clinics target students by advertising on college campuses and in the local community. They rely on misleading women by posing as comprehensive reproductive health clinics and advertising under “abortion,” “birth control,” and “family planning” services, but do not offer abortion services, contraception, or referrals.

These fake women’s healthcare centers often provide false information about abortion, birth control, and the effectiveness of condoms for the prevention of STIs, HIV, and pregnancy. Fake clinics target college students by locating their centers near campuses and advertising “free” pregnancy tests. According to a 2008 survey by the Feminist Majority Foundation, 48% of responding Campus Health Centers include fake clinics on their referral lists for students facing unintended pregnancies.

Approximately 2,500-3,500 fake clinics exist nationwide, outnumbering comprehensive reproductive health clinics. Most are affiliated with national anti-abortion organizations. These fake health clinics are also major outlets for misleading and harmful state and federally funded abstinence-only education initiatives.

## THE DANGER

Many of these fake clinics lie to women in need. A Congressional investigation into fake clinics revealed that 87% provided false or misleading information about the health effects of abortion. The Congressional report found many of these federally funded centers grossly misrepresent the medical risks of abortion by telling women that having an abortion could increase the risk of breast cancer, result in sterility and lead to suicide and “post-abortion syndrome.” A 2016 survey by the Feminist Majority Foundation also found that 21.7% of comprehensive clinics located near a fake clinic experienced one or more incidents of severe violence, compared to only 6.8% of clinics that are not near a fake clinic.

Since 1996, the federal government has spent more than \$2 billion on dangerous, misleading, and ineffective abstinence-only programs. Moreover, there are 29 states with “Choose Life” license plates and fifteen of these states provide funding for so-called crisis pregnancy centers and anti-abortion groups. In addition, the Texas Health and Human Services Department awarded \$1.6 million in 2016 to an anti-abortion group that will dole out the state funds to fake clinics.

## ENDING THE DECEPTION

**HAVE YOU SEEN THESE POPULAR CPC ADVERTISEMENTS?**  
**“PREGNANT? NEED HELP? YOU HAVE OPTIONS!”**  
**“PREGNANT? SCARED? WE CAN HELP! CALL 1-800-XXX-XXXX”**  
**“FREE PREGNANCY TESTS!”**

## FEDERAL FUNDING

The Trump Administration signaled a renewed commitment to harmful abstinence-only education and fake clinic funding last year by proposing \$277 million in funding for abstinence-only education programs in his FY 2018 budget proposal. Although the Administration’s budget for these failed programs was not fully funded, Congress did increase funding for one stream of “sexual risk avoidance” programs from \$5 million in FY 2016 to \$15 million in FY 2017. This figure is expected to increase to as much as \$25 million for FY 2018. Moreover, Title V abstinence-only funding (also rebranded as “sexual risk avoidance education”) was renewed by Congress for two more years at \$75 million annually.

In June of 2017, President Trump appointed Valerie Huber, president of a national abstinence-only education association, to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); as part of her responsibilities, Huber oversees the Office of Adolescent Health and Title X family planning programs and funding.

HHS announced “new criteria” for Title X grant applicants in March 2018 and indicated the Department intends to give special attention to applications from abstinence-only, faith-based and ‘natural family planning’ organizations, including so-called crisis pregnancy centers. Huber, who is virulently anti-choice, will have unprecedented power to determine which health care providers will receive awards from the \$260 million allocated to Title X.

In 2009, Congress and former President Obama’s administration eliminated most – but not all – sources of federal funding for abstinence-only education and fake clinics by requiring evidence-based, medically accurate prevention models. However, opponents inserted a clause into the Affordable Care Act of 2010 that created a \$50 million per year, five-year funding stream for Title V abstinence-only education programs, some of which are run by fake clinics.



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## STATE FUNDING

\$40.5 million in taxpayer dollars will go to fake clinics in 14 states during the 2018 fiscal year, including Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin. Nine of those states divert federal (TANF) money to fake clinics, totaling \$13.4 million. Early 2018, Florida proposed a law that would permanently direct state funding to fake clinics. In 2015 Vice President Pence (then Governor of Indiana), authorized \$3.5 million in federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds to support crisis pregnancy centers in his home state.

## FIGHTING BACK AT THE STATE AND MUNICIPAL LEVEL

In 2015, California passed landmark legislation called the Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care, and Transparency “FACT” Act to regulate unlicensed and licensed fake women’s health clinics. The CA FACT Act requires fake clinics that are licensed to display a notice stating California “has public programs that provide immediate free or low-cost access to comprehensive family planning services, prenatal care, and abortion, for eligible women.” It requires unlicensed fake clinics that advertise and provide pregnancy testing and care to post a notice saying they have neither a license nor licensed providers on staff.

On November 13, 2017, the Supreme Court granted certiorari to review the claim that California’s FACT Act violates the First Amendment rights of fake clinics. The Court is scheduled to hear *National Institute of Family and Life Advocates v. Xavier Becerra* on March 20, 2018. New York City, NY, San Francisco and Oakland, CA and Hartford, CT have all successfully regulated fake clinics in recent years and their ordinances have survived various legal challenges.

In February 2018, New York City fined a facility for the first time for violating Local Law 17, which requires fake clinics to display if a medical provider is on site, whether or not the facility offers abortion care, emergency contraception and prenatal care and whether they provide referrals for these services. San Francisco and Oakland passed measures regulating the commercial speech of fake clinics that prohibit “false or misleading advertising by limited services pregnancy centers.” Furthermore, Hartford, Connecticut passed an ordinance requiring fake clinics to disclose if they do not have a licensed medical provider on their websites, rather than in their advertisements.

In 2017, at the start of the current session of Congress, Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney introduced the “Stop Deceptive Advertising for Women’s Healthcare Services Act” in the House. The Act would hold fake clinics accountable for advertising abortion and family planning services they do not provide. Maloney has led the fight to pass legislation to regulate misleading advertising by fake health clinics for many years.

## HOW TO EXPOSE FAKE CLINICS: STEP BY STEP

### 1. KNOW THE FACTS

- Make sure your group studies up on fake clinics! Check out our online resources at [feministcampus.org](http://feministcampus.org).
- Contact your National Campus Organizer. We can help you implement the campaign on your campus!
- Visit [www.optionline.org](http://www.optionline.org) or [www.lifecall.org](http://www.lifecall.org) to find out if a fake clinic exists near your campus. (Note: These are anti-choice websites with locations of fake clinics and potentially triggering language or graphics.)
- If there is a fake clinic near your campus, your group can call or visit the facility to see what they say about abortion and birth control. Do they offer abortion as an option for an unplanned pregnancy? Do they offer condoms, EC, and/or birth control? Does their website make false claims like, “abortion causes breast cancer, infertility, suicide, or post-abortion syndrome?”

### 2. KNOW YOUR CAMPUS

- Visit your Campus Health Center. Does your Health Center know the difference between comprehensive women’s clinics and fake clinics? Where would they refer a student facing an unintended pregnancy? What about someone in need of emergency contraception? Do they include fake clinics on their referral lists?
- Does a fake clinic advertise on your campus? Check out your campus newspaper, billboards, cafeteria, and informational kiosks for “Worried? Pregnant? Call XXX-XXXX” ads or flyers.

### 3. STRATEGIES FOR TAKING ACTION

- Share your story with reproductive justice groups working to stop fake clinics. Have you been fooled by a fake clinic? Blog your story for the Feminist Campus Blog or share it with Lady Parts Justice story-collecting initiative.
- Write a LTE (letter to the editor) on campus and in your city showing support for the California FACT Act and explaining the danger of fake clinics by visiting [EndtheLies.com](http://EndtheLies.com).



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- Call your campus health center and ask if they refer pregnant students to fake clinics.
- Create educational flyers and posters identifying nearby comprehensive women's health clinics and warning students about the fake clinics in your area. Start by looking at the sample posters available at [feministcampus.org](http://feministcampus.org)!
- Work to establish "Truth in Advertising" policies on your campus or its media and require your campus Health Center to tell students that abortion and contraceptive services are not available at fake clinics.
- Circulate petitions and get active locally to add your community to the growing list of cities which are demanding honesty from fake clinics by passing local laws. Contact [campusteam@feminist.org](mailto:campusteam@feminist.org) for more information.
- Educate activists in your community on the deception of fake clinics and their connections to clinic violence. Share the FMF video "Expose Fake Clinics."
- Stage a protest outside of your nearest fake clinic, warning people about the deceptive practices of crisis pregnancy centers. Record and photograph your demonstration – send it to us to post on YouTube and Facebook!
- Petition Google, Facebook, and other social media outlets to end deceptive advertising for fake clinics.
- Join Lady Parts Justice campaign to #ExposeFakeClinics by writing accurate, honest reviews of fake clinics on Yelp or Google+. For tips, check out [exposefakeclinics.com](http://exposefakeclinics.com).
- Demand politicians to end funding for abstinence-only programs, especially through the allocation of TANF, Title V, and Title X funds.
- Get involved with Feminist Campus' Adopt-A-Clinic project to help keep abortion clinics safe from harassment and violence.