

# What Reproductive Rights Advocates Need to Know About Anti-Abortion Crisis Pregnancy Centers

## I. WHAT ARE CPCs AND WHY ARE THEY HARMFUL?

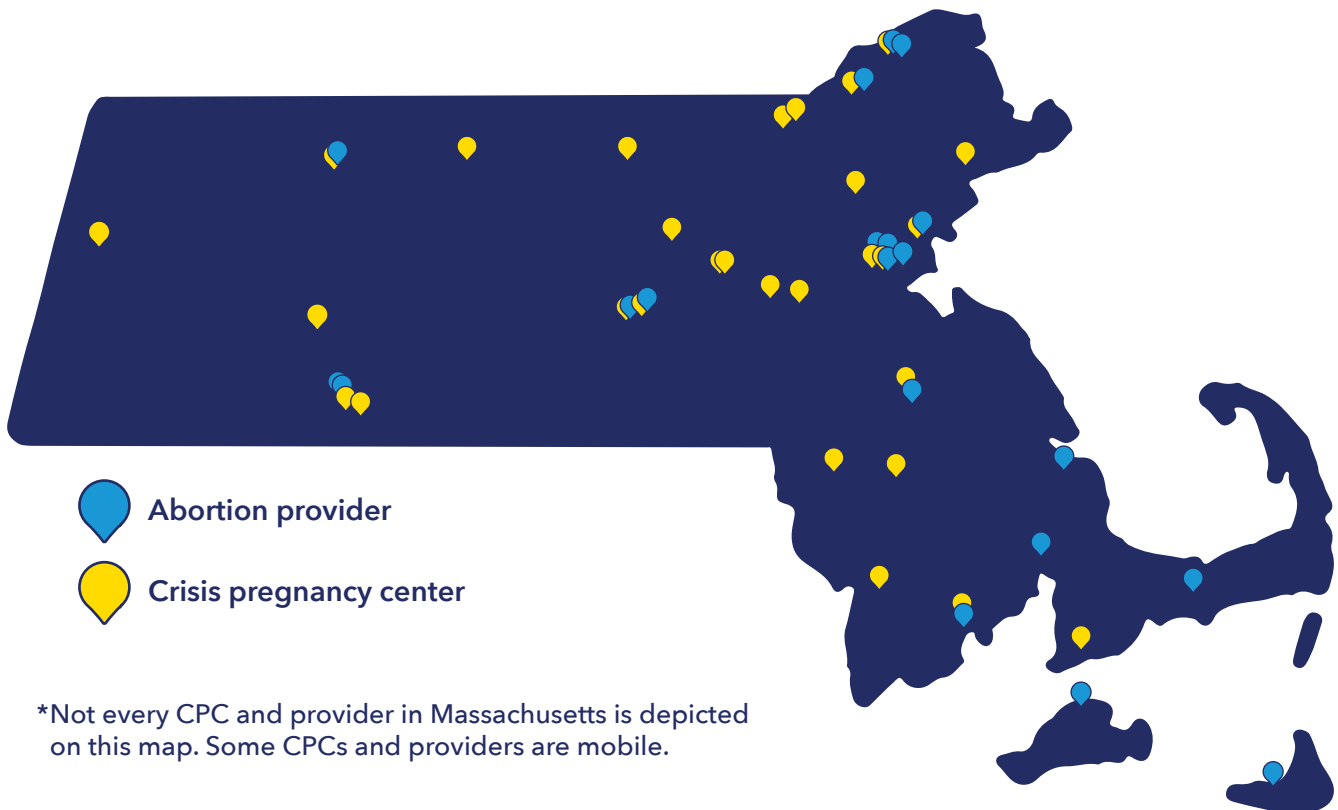
Anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) offer pregnancy-related “information” and “counseling,” but not abortion or emergency contraception. They are rarely licensed medical providers and primarily attempt to dissuade people from obtaining an abortion or contraceptive care as a part of their anti-abortion mission.

Despite not being licensed medical facilities, many CPCs offer “limited medical services” including pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease testing and obstetric ultrasounds. These services are typically not performed by licensed medical professionals, but by employees or volunteers, who often wear white coats like doctors do. Visitors to CPCs are subject to dangerous misinformation from staff, who routinely provide medically inaccurate and unsupported information regarding abortion, and who may inaccurately interpret the results of an ultrasound – such as an incorrect gestational age or misdiagnose a dangerous pregnancy as healthy. Since CPCs are not licensed medical facilities, they are also not covered by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This means that they are legally allowed to share the personal health information that they collect from patients with other anti-abortion organizations – and often do.

### *Where are they located?*

There are **more than 30\*** anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers in Massachusetts; in many parts of the state, CPCs outnumber health centers or hospitals that provide abortion. Nationally, CPCs outnumber abortion providers 3:1.

Many CPCs are deliberately located near legitimate reproductive health clinics, often in lower income communities, and will use similar names or logos as abortion clinics. These deceptive efforts are coupled with the distribution of free pregnancy tests, diapers, baby clothes, and parenting classes, and are intended to lure pregnant people away from real reproductive health care providers and into CPCs.



## II. WHY ARE CPCs HARD TO REGULATE?

Because most CPCs are part of well-connected and well-resourced religious networks with a “global mission” to prevent abortions, they have a 5:1 funding advantage over abortion providers and are able to spend significant resources on costly legal battles. Many states have attempted to prevent CPCs from engaging in deceptive advertising practices or to require that CPCs accurately inform patients about abortion, but these policies have been ruled unconstitutional by state courts for violating the First Amendment right to free speech. It is also difficult to invoke consumer protection laws against CPCs because they offer free services, which typically aren’t considered trade and commerce by law.

## III. HOW CAN WE PREVENT CPCs FROM DOING HARM?

Many people do not know what CPCs are, so public education is essential to inform the public about what CPCs are and how to identify them, as well as informing them of where else they can go for these resources. This can include information sharing in communities where CPCs are and spreading awareness about CPCs’ harmful and deceptive practices on social media and local media. The Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office also both have ways for people who have been harmed by CPCs to file complaints.

The number one reason people go to CPCs is for free material aid such as pregnancy tests or diapers, so it is crucial that these materials are provided elsewhere in communities. Partnering with community health centers can help create another option for pregnant people. There are 52 community health centers in Massachusetts, many of which are in areas where CPCs operate. These community health centers offer pregnancy testing and other pregnancy-related services at little or no cost and do not deny care, regardless of a patient’s ability to pay. However, most people are unaware of these services, so engaging community health centers in developing an education campaign to advertise and inform about these services could be effective. Visit [plannedparenthood.org](https://www.plannedparenthood.org) for a list of legitimate healthcare providers that also provide these services and resources.

### KNOW THE SIGNS: HOW TO SPOT A CPC

- It’s listed online as a pregnancy resource center, pregnancy help center, pregnancy care center, women’s resource center, or abortion alternatives.
- They advertise free pregnancy tests, abortion counseling, pre-abortion screenings, abortion education, post-abortion care, or after-abortion help – but they refuse to help you get an abortion.
- They advertise “abortion pill reversal” or say you can “reverse” an abortion. (This isn’t true – you can’t reverse an abortion.)
- They say abortion is unsafe, or that it leads to cancer, infertility, or mental health problems. (None of this is true.)
- They say negative things about abortion, birth control, condoms, or sex.
- They don’t provide condoms or other effective birth control methods like the pill, patch, ring, shot, IUD, or implant.
- They try to talk about religion even when you don’t want to.
- They say judgmental things about sex before marriage, single parenting, LGBTQ+ people, or people of color.
- They offer items like clothes, diapers, and bottles, but you have to go to lectures and workshops from the CPC to “earn” them.

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