



UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM — MINORITY STAFF
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION
JULY 2006

**FALSE AND MISLEADING HEALTH INFORMATION
PROVIDED BY FEDERALLY FUNDED
PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS**

PREPARED FOR
REP. HENRY A. WAXMAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2004, Rep. Henry A. Waxman released a report analyzing the scientific accuracy of the curricula taught by federally funded abstinence-only education programs. That report found that the abstinence curricula often contained false or distorted information that misled teens about sex and reproductive health.

At the request of Rep. Waxman, this report examines the scientific accuracy of the information provided by another Bush Administration priority: federally funded "pregnancy resource centers." These organizations, which are also called "crisis pregnancy centers," provide counseling to pregnant teenagers and women. Since 2001, pregnancy resource centers have received over \$30 million in federal funding. Most of this money has come from federal programs for abstinence-only education. Additional funding has been distributed as "capacity-building" grants to 25 pregnancy resource centers in 15 states as part of the new \$150 million Compassion Capital Fund. Individual centers have also been the beneficiaries of earmarks in appropriations bills.

For this report, female investigators telephoned the 25 pregnancy resource centers that have received grants from the Compassion Capital Fund, requesting information and advice regarding an unintended pregnancy. Twenty-three of the centers were successfully contacted. In each call, the investigator posed as a pregnant 17-year-old trying to decide whether to have an abortion.

During the investigation, 20 of the 23 centers (87%) provided false or misleading information about the health effects of abortion. Often these federally funded centers grossly misrepresented the medical risks of abortion, telling the callers that having an abortion could increase the risk of

breast cancer, result in sterility, and lead to suicide and "post-abortion stress disorder."

Specifically, the report finds:

- **The centers provided false and misleading information about a link between abortion and breast cancer.** There is a medical consensus that induced abortion does not cause an increased risk of breast cancer. Despite this consensus, eight centers told the caller that having an abortion would in fact increase her risk. One center said that "all abortion causes an increased risk of breast cancer in later years." Another claimed that research shows a "far greater risk" of breast cancer after an abortion, telling the caller that an abortion would "affect the milk developing in her breasts" and that the risk of breast cancer increased by as much as 80% following an abortion.

- *Dolle, Summary - Risk Factors for Triple Negative - Jan 2010*
The centers provided false and misleading information about the effect of abortion on future fertility. Abortions in the first trimester, using the most common abortion procedure, do not pose an increased risk for future fertility. However, seven centers told the caller that having an abortion could hurt her chances of having children in the future. One center said that damage from abortion could lead to "many miscarriages" or to "permanent damage" so "you wouldn't be able to carry," telling the caller that this is "common" and happens "a lot." Another center said, "In the future you could have trouble conceiving another baby" because of scar tissue, a side effect of abortion that happens to "a lot of women." *Abortion "Complications".pdf*

- **The centers provided false and misleading information about the mental health effects of abortion.** Research shows that significant

www.afterabortion.com
After Abortion - Neutral website.pdf

psychological stress after an abortion is no more common than after birth. However, thirteen centers told the caller that the psychological effects of abortion are severe, long-lasting, and common. One center said that the suicide rate in the year after an abortion "goes up by seven times." Another center said that post-abortion stress suffered by women having abortions is "much like" that seen in soldiers returning from Vietnam and "is something that anyone who's had an abortion is sure to suffer from." Other centers said that abortion can cause "guilt, ... sexual problems, ... suicidal ideas, ... drug use, eating disorders," and "a downward spiral

where they lose friends and family members."

The individuals who contact federally funded pregnancy resource centers are often vulnerable teenagers, who are susceptible to being misled and need medically accurate information to help them make a fully informed decision. The vast majority of pregnancy resource centers contacted for this report, however, provided false or misleading information about the health risks of an abortion. This may advance the mission of the pregnancy resource centers, which are typically pro-life organizations dedicated to preventing abortion, but it is an inappropriate public health practice.