

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Prayer outside Abortion Clinics

1. **Is there any possibility of getting arrested?**

Not as long as you follow the instructions. Each participant is asked to sign a Statement of Peace which clearly outlines the limitations of our activity. We have the legal right to be on the public sidewalk. We do not have the right to trespass on private property, block traffic, or block access to the property. We do not have the right to park in the lot for the building, or to leave signs unattended. We also do not have the right to touch other people who do not want to be touched, or to disturb the peace with shouting or loud noises. When a rule is violated, the police are most likely to simply ask you to comply.

2. **Do I have to hold a sign? Do I have to make a sign to hold?**

No, but the signs help people to understand why we are there, and let abortion clients know that we are offering them help. Signs are provided. Only certain signs are approved. Please do not make your own without getting approval from Marie.

3. **Why can't I just pray at home?**

Prayer at home is great, but can be inconsistent, distracted, or short-lived. Prayer outside an abortion facility brings home the reality of abortion, and gives an urgency to prayer. When your prayer partner is counting on you to come at a specific time, you are more likely to do it. It is a powerful witness to the clients, the abortion workers, and the community.

4. **Does it really make a difference?**

Yes. We may not always see any visible results, but presence outside the clinic has been proven to be valuable.

- Former abortion clinic workers report that when people are praying outside, the “no-show” rate goes up.
- Past 40 Days for Life campaigns have saved over 14,000 babies from abortion since 2007, and those are just the ones we know about.
- Many women who come to abortion clinics do not have their minds made up, but the clinic is only interested in selling abortions, not other alternatives. Our presence reminds them that there are alternatives. If a client does come to talk us, we can refer her to a nearby pregnancy help center.
- We can also offer help to clinic workers who want to leave their jobs. Since 2007, 177 abortion clinic workers have left their jobs after 40 Days for Life campaigns. Abortionworker.com offers help.
- The community is also reminded of the reality of abortion. In Sharpstown in particular, there is no external indication that abortions are happening in the building, and neighbors walking by have been surprised to learn that abortions were happening right there. Awareness stimulates thought and action.

6. What should I bring?

- Come prepared to be outdoors: wear sunscreen, bring water if you like, bring a poncho or umbrella if rain is a possibility. The prayer schedule is expected to be filled rain or shine. In the case of thunder & lightning, you may wait in your car until it passes.
- Bring your cell phone and have a few numbers recorded in the phone: Marie McCoy, non-emergency number for local police, your prayer partner, perhaps a few other prayer volunteers.

7. What materials will be provided?

- Signs
- A clipboard with the prayer schedule for the day, including emails and phone numbers of each volunteer. Volunteers sign in and out with the time they arrive and leave.
- Prayer booklets for those who wish to use them.
- Referral information appropriate for each location.
- These materials may be inside a large blue portfolio. The first volunteer of the day will bring it, and the last will return it to its storage place.

8. What is it like?

It is generally quiet and peaceful. We stand along relatively quiet side streets. If at all possible, two or more volunteers are scheduled for each hour. If you find yourself alone, you are not required to stay. You might wait in your car for your partner and call them, or call other volunteers to see if someone can come to accompany you. Each participant may pray as they wish. Some prayer volunteers pray together with others present, others pray silently and may walk back and forth on the sidewalk as they pray. In Sharpstown we have had no interactions with clients or abortion workers, and our occasional interactions with passers-by have been very positive. At Planned Parenthood, those who are trained in sidewalk counseling may try to offer help to clients, but those not trained are asked to simply pray and not approach the cars. PP employees seem to be trained not to pay any attention to us.

9. But what do I do if ...

- Someone yells negative comments or insults: no response, or very calm reply. Do not yell back.
- If a client asks how we can help her: Thank her for coming to us. Tell her you care about her and are so glad that she is considering alternatives to abortion. Listen to her if she starts sharing her story. Refer her to Option Line (give her a business card with the number) and to the nearest pregnancy help center. Offer to pray for her.
- If I feel threatened: Call the police or in a true emergency call 911.

For more details, see Instructions for Participants for each location.

More questions? Email Marie at Marie@ChristianVoicesforLife.org or call her at 281-610-3986.