

Your Patients' Rights:

What to Know about Fake Women's Health Centers in New York City

About Fake Women's Health Centers

Fake women's health centers, also known as crisis pregnancy centers or CPCs, operate with the goal of convincing women considering abortion to continue their pregnancies. Usually unlicensed by any governmental agency, these centers advertise themselves as providing medical care and pregnancy counseling to women facing an unplanned pregnancy, but they are very vague about the services they actually provide. In an effort to deceive women, they appear to be medical facilities – they often offer pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, collect patient information, and the staff is dressed in scrubs or white coats – but they usually do not have licensed health care providers on their staff. Fake clinics, including those in New York City, often set up next to abortion clinics to maximize this confusion.

The centers often include the word “choice” or “options” in the name. Although they do not advertise this, they will not provide abortion or contraception or referrals to reproductive health care providers, and any information on those services that they provide is misleading or inaccurate.

There are estimated to be 12 fake clinics operating in New York City.

NYC Has a Local Ordinance to Hold Fake Clinics Accountable

Fake clinics must disclose, in posted 11x17 signs in the clinic entrance and any areas where clients receive services, that the facility does not have a licensed medical provider on staff. They also must make an oral disclosure if asked about time sensitive procedures like abortion, prenatal care or emergency contraception. The disclosure must also be included on advertising, social media posts and on every page of their websites.

Specifically, the posted disclosure must say: “this facility does not have a licensed medical provider on-site to provide or supervise all services,” in English and Spanish.

Because you may see patients who have visited these centers when seeking pregnancy-related care or abortion services, reproductive health care providers like you are in a great position to report violations of the law.

If Your Patient Has Visited a Fake Women's Health Center

If your patient tells you that they visited a facility that you suspect was a fake clinic, ask them if they were told whether or not a licensed medical provider is on their staff, and if they remember seeing any disclosure signs. **Fake clinics must post a sign indicating that they do not have a medical provider on staff, and publicize that information in advertisements and verbal interactions with their clients.**

If your patient was not given this disclosure or they were given false information, the facility may be in violation of the law. Be aware that staff will often wear scrubs or white coats, or operate sonogram equipment, even if they are not medical providers. **Any time you or your patient is**

unsure if the facility qualifies as a fake women's health center, tell them about their right to file a complaint. You can also file complaints.

You may also file complaints with the city if you see advertisements for fake clinics that do not say "this facility does not have a licensed medical provider on-site to provide or supervise all services," in English and Spanish.

How to File a Complaint

Fake clinic complaints are filed through 311. The online form is available here:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/service/5850/pregnancy-services-center-complaint>

When you file a complaint you will be given a tracking number. Please record that number and share it with Lauren Boc, State Policy Strategist at Physicians for Reproductive Health, at lboc@prh.org. This will help local advocates keep track of complaints and make sure that the Department of Consumer Affairs is adequately investigating them.