



**Pro-Life Wisconsin presents:**

# **A Sidewalk Counselor's Handbook**

Pro-Life Wisconsin

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# Table of Contents

## Part 1: The Foundations of Sidewalk Counseling

Introduction: A divine calling ..... 3

Roles on the Sidewalk ..... 3

Goals of Sidewalk Counseling ..... 4

## Part 2: What Drives Abortion Facility Business?

The Perspectives of Potential Abortion Victims..... 5

Why People Patronize Abortion Facilities: Abortion and other “services”..... 5

## Part 3: Methods and Techniques

Methods of Sidewalk Counseling ..... 7

What Do You Say? ..... 10

Tips for Sidewalk Counseling..... 11

What NOT to do..... 12

Be Prepared: A sidewalk counselor’s checklist ..... 13

A Final Word of Encouragement ..... 13

Sidewalk Counseling Methods Resources ..... 14



# Part 1: The Foundations of Sidewalk Counseling

## Introduction: A divine calling

Sidewalk counselors are the last line of defense for abortion or contraception-bound women and men. That might seem like a daunting task. Does it require an advanced degree, a license or some sort of certification?

It does not. Sidewalk counseling can be as simple as saying, “Hi, my name is Dan, and this is for you,” and handing a woman a piece of literature on the harms of abortion or on the myriad of resources available to help her choose life. In fact, sidewalk counseling is any peaceful effort to direct abortion and contraception-minded women and men to healthy options.

This work is a divine calling. While it might be tempting—even for the humblest of sidewalk counselors—to believe that babies are saved and souls healed through our efforts, in reality, this is God’s mission. We simply make ourselves available to join Him. And in doing so we participate in Jesus’ mission of love and life.

## Roles on the Sidewalk

Pro-life sidewalk activism can take three forms. Each method is valid and necessary, but it’s important for sidewalk activists to keep in mind the distinctions between each of these three roles:

1. **Protester:** The role of the protester or picketer is to engage in protest in front of key locations (abortion facilities or referral sites, government buildings or courthouses, or other facilities involved in the destruction of innocent human life). Protesters carry signs and lawfully draw attention to violations of the sanctity of human life and might aim to discourage patronage of abortion-related businesses.



2. **Prayer Warrior:** The role of a prayer warrior is to peacefully pray for an end to abortion and contraception and to pray for those involved in and victimized by the Culture of Death. Prayer warriors might also carry signs, but their primary mission is not demonstrating; it’s praying. Prayer warriors can pray on their own, but they also play a valuable role in praying while sidewalk counselors talk to potential abortion victims.

3. **Sidewalk Counselor:** Sidewalk counselors are not present to demonstrate or protest but to help counsel women and men out of decisions to abort or use contraception. They should not carry signs because their primary mission is to connect with potential victims of the abortion/contraception industry. They can pray between encounters on the sidewalk, but their primary mission is to counsel.

It’s this last role that we’re primarily concerned with today. The roles of picketer and prayer warrior are fairly



straightforward. This program aims to educate sidewalk counselors in appropriate and effective methods for sidewalk counseling.

## Goals of Sidewalk Counseling

If you are to have success sidewalk counseling, it's critical to know what your goals are. While you're on the streets, you can pursue several different types of goals:

1. **Ultimate Goal:** Our ultimate goal as Christians is eternal life with God in Heaven. On the sidewalk, our ultimate goal is, by God's grace, to draw the women and men you encounter to Jesus. Help them to seek and to find the peace and joy of God's love.
2. **Practical Goal:** In sidewalk counseling, our practical goal is to help the prospective abortion/contraception victims make the healthy choice of not going through with aborting or contracepting. Pursuit of this goal might entail directing them to a pregnancy help center, successfully encouraging them to give their child the gift of birth, encouraging them to reject the contraceptive lifestyle, or fostering acceptance and joy of bearing new life. When counseling post-abortive women and men, it might entail listening and directing the individual(s) to healing resources like Rachel's Vineyard.
3. **Proximate/Immediate Goal:** In order to accomplish the practical goal of preventing abortion and contraception, you must accomplish the immediate goal of slowing the counselee down. Typically, abortion-minded women and men are in a state of panic, seeking to solve the "problem" of being pregnant as quickly as possible. You want to slow the process down. Encouraging them to stop, to listen, to think about alternatives or to take literature is the first step in that process.
4. **Personal Goal:** While your efforts on the sidewalk are primarily based in love for other, you might want to set a personal goal of growing in holiness. For example, you can resolve to be patient, to avoid anger and to bring sanctity to the abortion site through your conduct.
5. **Realistic Goal:** You might not accomplish every goal each time you're out on the sidewalk. But there is one goal you can always achieve: love each victim in need, whether it be the mother, the pre-born child, the father, friends, grandparents, abortion workers, passersby or others. You can succeed in ensuring that no one passes by without trying to serve them personally.



# Part 2: What Drives Abortion Facility Business?

## The Perspectives of Potential Abortion Victims

If we are to successfully reach out to abortion-minded women and men, it's critical to have some idea of where they are coming from. The stereotype painted by the abortion industry of an empowered, independent woman exercising her right of choice provides no help. In reality, women abort because they don't feel they have a choice. We can help provide alternatives that both women and their babies can live with for a lifetime.

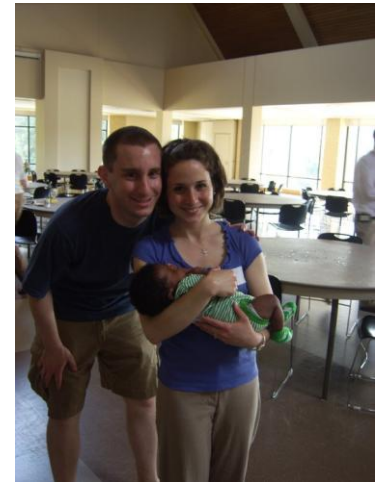
It's important to consider the perspective of those you're trying to counsel. Everyone coming and going from the clinic is in pain. Many may be afraid of you because of what the abortion workers have told them or because of the media. The pain and fear might lead to unpleasant encounters so remember to stay patient and loving with those who are less-than-receptive to your outreach

A woman might consider abortion for a variety of reasons: her parents are forcing her; her husband/boyfriend is forcing her; she has concerns about a medical issue; she seemingly doesn't care about the life of her child; she is too tormented to make a decision; she is sick during pregnancy; or, she feels incompetent to support a child. These concerns can be met with assurances of help from you or a pregnancy help center.

But why are women aborting? New research compiled by UnChoice.com sheds some light on that question. Of post-abortive women:

- 64 percent of women reported feeling pressured to abort.
- Most felt rushed or uncertain, yet 67 percent weren't counseled.
- 79 percent weren't told of available resources.
- 84 percent weren't sufficiently informed before abortion.

It's also important to note that pressure to abort can escalate to violence. In fact, homicide is the leading killer of pregnant women.



A baby shower for a baby saved by sidewalk counselors

That's the bad news. However, of women who chose abortion, 82 percent would have chosen life had even ONE person encouraged them to do so. The good news is that out on the sidewalks, YOU can be that person!

## Why People Patronize Abortion Facilities: Abortion and other “services”

Abortion isn't the only reason women come to abortion centers. In fact, abortion facility staff members often tell women to say they're not coming for abortion but for other services. Still, even if a woman is visiting an abortion facility for a legitimate service, you can encourage her to patronize a clinic that does not abort children. Your local pregnancy help center might be able to provide referrals to services that will be low-cost or free. Here's a rundown of reasons women might come to the facility.



## Abortion Visits

- **Abortion “Counseling”:** Wisconsin state law requires that women have a primary abortion appointment 24 hours prior to having their abortion. They may come for “counseling” as a first visit.
- **Abortion Referral:** Depending on your location, your facility might not perform abortions, but instead provide medical or non-medical referrals to sites that do perform abortions.
- **Abortion “Pill”:** The abortion “pill” (chemical or “medical” abortion) is offered up to 9 weeks after the start of the last menstrual period. If the last period was more than 9 weeks ago, surgical abortion is used.
- **Surgical Abortion:** Depending on location, surgical abortion might be offered all nine months of pregnancy.
- **Abortion Follow-Up:** Women might come for a physical examination or follow-up appointment after their abortion.

## Abortifacient Birth Control

Visits for abortifacient might include the birth control Pill (or its variants), the birth control implant (Implanon), the birth control patch (Ortho Evra), the birth control shot/injections, the vaginal ring (NuvaRing), emergency contraception (Morning After Pill), or the IUD.

## “Barrier” or non-abortifacient birth control

Visits for barrier method birth control might include the diaphragm, condom, female condom, spermicide or sterilization.

## Women's Health Services

Abortion facilities might also provide legitimate health services, including breast exams, cervical cancer screening, colposcopy, cryotherapy, incontinence education, infertility education, mammogram referrals, Pap tests, pregnancy testing, routine physicals for women age 12 and older, urinary tract infection testing and treatment, vaginal infection testing and treatment and more.





# Part 3: Methods and Techniques

## Methods of Sidewalk Counseling

**Outreach Method:** The Outreach Method entails counseling a woman as a concerned friend. Though you might be a stranger, your concern for women, men and their babies compels you to encourage them to make healthy choices. How do you do this?

1. **Introduce yourself:** If you're trying to talk with clients entering a parking lot, position yourself on the sidewalk near the driveway. By establishing eye contact with the vehicle's occupants, you make it known you're looking to initiate conversation. Be sure not to block the driveway or to enter onto private property. If you are counseling a pedestrian, walk toward the person. Establish eye contact early, and stop at the halfway point of your approach so as to not intimidate your counselee.



You might greet your counselee by saying, “Hi my name is Dan. Do you have an appointment today?” By using your first name, you send the message that you're approaching as a friendly face. Revealing your name also helps win trust. Think of it this way: when approached by a stranger, a woman might reasonably feel vulnerable. With your introduction, you've initiated a relationship and revealed something about yourself.

2. **Meet them where they are:** You've gone out to the sidewalks because you want to save babies and protect mothers from the harms of abortion and contraception. The people you're counseling have different interests, goals, fears and motivations. While you recognize the existence of a baby growing inside this woman's body, she might recognize it as a problem—and one she needs to solve quickly. By attempting to meet her needs, you create opportunities to help solve her problems. As sidewalk counselor Karen Black has said, “When you stand out on that sidewalk, you are not counseling that child. If the child could answer you and respond, the child would not choose abortion. However, you're not talking to the baby, you're talking to [his or her] mother.”

That's not to say there's no place for recognizing the humanity of the pre-born child. Many women choose life for this reason. Just remember you need to meet the mother's needs as well. [CrisisPregnancies.org](http://CrisisPregnancies.org) is a website designed for smartphones that allows you to keep information and multimedia on both abortion alternatives AND the humanity of the pre-born child easily accessible while you're on site.

3. **Offer them help:** When you meet abortion-minded women where they are, you'll usually find that the decision to abort is driven by fear. Abortion is frequently driven by a lack of support for a pregnant woman. **Again, 82 percent of post-abortive women say they would have chosen life if even one person had offered them help. YOU CAN BE THAT PERSON.** Familiarize yourself with the



resources in your community. What crisis pregnancy centers exist, and when are they open? (Visit [CrisisPregnancies.org](http://CrisisPregnancies.org) to find out!) What is the number of the 24/7 hotline? (It's 800-395-4357.) How can a woman keep her baby and work to pay the bills or pursue an education? Wherever you're counseling, the answers are there.

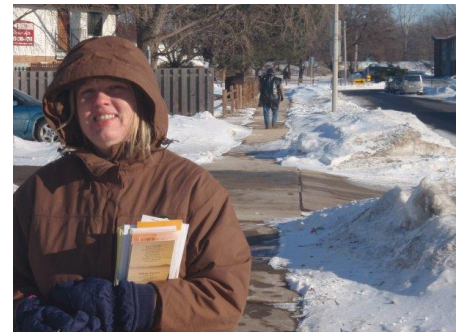
**Chicago Method:** The Chicago Method was pioneered by the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago and entails educating women about litigation (particularly for malpractice) against the abortion facility. While a woman might or might not trust you, she may likely be concerned to learn that her abortionist is facing a lawsuit.

The Chicago Method is not frequently used in Wisconsin because there are fewer malpractice cases than in Illinois. (Additionally, abortion facilities have required women to sign a consent form acknowledging, "I have completed all state requirements and after careful thought and consideration, I choose to have an abortion and my choice is made freely and without force. As with any kind of surgery, complications, including death, can occur. The type of abortion procedure and how early in the pregnancy it takes place determine the degree of risk.")



To research litigation against abortion facilities in Wisconsin, visit [wcca.wicourts.gov](http://wcca.wicourts.gov).

**Literature Method:** The Literature Method can be as simple as providing abortion or contraception bound women and men with a brochure that provides critical information, including fetal development, the harms of abortion and contraception or crisis pregnancy alternatives available to them. The Literature Method might be preferred at abortion facilities with parking lots where you might only get a few seconds to interact with a woman.



1. **Plan ahead:** You might be nervous and you'll likely have a short window of time to provide a woman or man with literature, so you'll want to be well organized. Consider which literature to bring to the abortion facility. Pro-Life Wisconsin offers brochures on surgical abortion, chemical abortion, the Morning After Pill, hormonal contraception, fetal development, post-abortion healing and local pregnancy help centers free of charge. You might bring one or all of these pieces with you, but you'll definitely want to have it well-organized once you're on site. If you have a smartphone, [CrisisPregnancies.org](http://CrisisPregnancies.org) brings all of this information and more together on a mobile phone-tailored website you can bring to the sidewalks.
2. **Introduce yourself:** If you're trying to talk with clients entering a parking lot, position yourself on the sidewalk near the driveway. By establishing eye contact with the vehicle's occupants, you make it known you're looking to initiate conversation. Be sure not to block the driveway or to enter onto private property. If you are counseling a pedestrian, walk toward the person. Establish eye contact early, and stop at the halfway point of your approach so as to not intimidate your counselee.

In either case, introduce yourself. Again, by using your first name, you send the message that





you're approaching as a friendly face. This greeting also provides you with the opportunity to offer a piece of pro-life literature.

3. **Be prepared to talk:** In many cases, the counselee might simply walk or drive by you. In other circumstances, you might have a few brief seconds to hand out some literature. But be prepared to answer questions about your literature or crisis pregnancy alternatives if you're asked.

**Post-Abortion Counseling:** Because our ultimate goal is bringing souls to Christ, our concern and care for women who have abortions does not end after the abortion has taken place. We seek to help direct post-abortive mothers, fathers, siblings, relatives and friends to healing resources.

One of the most critical things you can do for someone in need of healing after an abortion is to refer her or him to the Rachel's Vineyard retreat program. These retreats are run by trained professionals with experience helping people find healing after abortion. Pro-Life Wisconsin can provide you with brochures, and you'll want to familiarize yourself with the local contact person. This will help you counsel on Rachel's Vineyard with confidence. For additional information visit [RachelsVineyard.org](http://RachelsVineyard.org). Furthermore, scholarships are available from Pro-Life Wisconsin so do not let the cost of a retreat become an obstacle.

While referral to Rachel's Vineyard is the most essential component of post-abortion counseling, there are several dos and don'ts for your conversation on the sidewalk:

**DO:**

- Listen.
- Show compassion and sincere concern for the loss.
- Offer post-abortion healing resources.
- Without appearing condescending, offer to pray for the counselee.

**DON'T:**

- Judge.
- Argue. The abortion has already taken place. Our purpose is to help this person find healing.
- Touch the person. While hugging or a pat on the back might be typical ways to express sympathy or compassion, a woman who has had an abortion has been violated in one of the most intimately intrusive manners.
- Say "I know how you feel"—unless you do. Unless you've suffered from an abortion yourself, a statement like this may seem insensitive, possibly increasing feelings of isolation and distress.

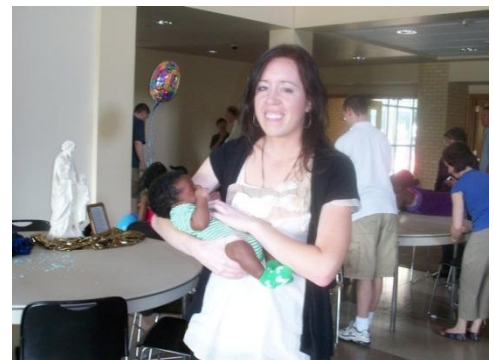
About half of all abortions are *repeat* abortions, and about one in four American women have lost a child to abortion. That means there's a good chance that the abortion-minded woman (or companion) with whom you are speaking has already been involved in at least one abortion. Keep these tips in mind even if it's not evident that you're talking to somebody who is post-abortive.



## What Do You Say?

It's impossible to know ahead of time what message might open a woman's mind or touch a man's heart, fostering an openness to life. Here are some common approaches:

- **Help is available.** Remember that most women don't choose abortion freely. Offering help (particularly from pregnancy help centers) is the foundation of the Outreach Method and can help a woman overcome the crisis without killing her child.
- **How far along are you?** This question can be a great way to deliver fetal development information. Simply ask a woman how far along she is and find the corresponding picture and facts in your literature or on CrisisPregnancies.org. Many women have abortions because they are afraid of becoming a mother. You can help remind women that they already ARE mothers.
- **Contraception can cause early chemical abortions.** Some patrons might consider themselves pro-life and are "just" coming for birth control. Some are coached by the abortion facility to say they're coming for contraception rather than abortion. Educate these clients that birth control can cause early chemical abortions.
- **Abortion is dangerous.** Abortion can lead to a myriad of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual side effects that can last a lifetime. Familiarize yourself with a few so you can make sure potential victims of abortion know the risks.
- **Get a (FREE) second opinion.** It's always a great idea to get a second opinion before any major medical decision, and this talking point is a great way to handle problems with the mother's or baby's health. Emphasize that the second opinion and all services at the pregnancy help center are free.
- **There's hope after rape.** Most women who conceive in rape actually choose life, and those who don't often report that the abortion was like a "medical rape," a second intimate violation that can scar for years. Abortion can't heal sexual assault.
- **The problems that lead to an abortion decision will still be there after the abortion.** Financial troubles, relationship problems, and most contributing factors to an abortion decision won't actually be solved by an abortion decision. They'll be exacerbated by the physical and emotional trauma.
- **There's no need to rush.** The abortion industry will still be willing to take your money next week. Take some time to really consider alternatives to a choice that can't be undone.



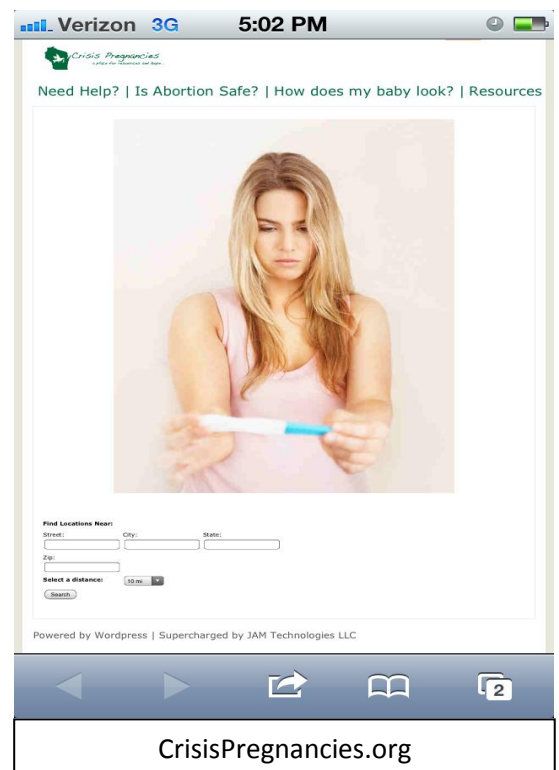
- **This is your flesh and blood.** While many men pressure the mothers of their children into abortion, many men are ambivalent—or even oppose the abortion decision. But our cultural climate has them convinced that abortion is the woman’s decision. Still, every child has a mother AND a father. Appeal to the father’s role as a co-creator of this human life and encourage him to protect the mother and child from the abortion facility.
- **EVERYTHING you need is available at \_\_\_\_\_.** When in doubt, refer to the pregnancy help center. This line is especially useful for women coming for other services. Have the local pregnancy help center let them know where they can find help with breast exams, cancer screenings, pap tests, etc.
- **Remember, you can come out here and talk to us at any time.** Most successful sidewalk counseling encounters don’t result in immediate success. You’re planting a seed that might bloom after your conversation ends, and the woman enters the facility. Remind her that you’re still willing to help even if she doesn’t accept your offer right away.

## Tips for Sidewalk Counseling

There are a lot of ways to sidewalk counsel, and almost all of them can be used to save lives and souls. If you’re looking to maximize your likelihood of a positive encounter on the sidewalks, here are some helpful tips.

### Before you go:

1. **Come dressed for the weather.** When it’s cold, dress a little warmer than you expect you’ll need. When you’re outside more than a few minutes, you feel colder. If you’re nervous you might also feel colder.
2. **Don’t come dressed for a pro-life rally.** Pro-life shirts can be a great way to witness, but they might intimidate those you’re trying to counsel. Dress in a modest and unthreatening manner that doesn’t reveal any “agenda” so that your loving concern for those you counsel shines through!
3. **Have backup.** You never want to sidewalk counsel alone. Bringing a friend is important for both prayer support and safety.
4. **Bring your smartphone.** [CrisisPregnancies.org](http://CrisisPregnancies.org) is a website specifically tailored for mobile phones. You can use it to show abortion clients ultrasound videos, the sound of a pre-born child’s heartbeat, pregnancy help center information and more.
5. **If you have a camera, bring it, but use it with discretion.** Having a camera provides you with an opportunity to document what takes place at the abortion facility (like an ambulance leaving following a botched abortion). It also can provide proof if any unjust accusations are made regarding your presence at the abortion facility. The camera on your cell phone is sufficient. Don’t use your camera to record people entering the abortion facility. It can create an adversarial relationship between you



and the person you're counseling and poses the risk of affirming an abortion decision. (Don't feel like a camera is necessary to ensure your safety; it's just a helpful tool.)

6. **Visit your local pregnancy help center.** These centers are generally willing to arrange a tour if you ask (call ahead!), and you'll be better equipped to make a referral.
7. **Know the abortion facility logistics.** When does it open? Which days are abortions performed? What other "services" are provided? How late in a pregnancy does the center perform abortions?

## While you're there

1. **Know your rights and obligations.** You have a right to be on the public sidewalk as long as you don't obstruct anybody else from moving freely.
2. **Obey law enforcement.** It's always possible that the police may be called by the abortion facility. Even if you feel your rights are being violated, follow the police's instructions and let an attorney rectify the situation later. This will prevent your arrest. After all, you can't save lives if you're in jail! Pro-Life Wisconsin can help arrange for free legal representation.
3. **Don't be intimidated** or afraid of trying to remember ALL of the sidewalk counseling methods, tips, techniques or facts. Memorize a few talking points and be confident sharing them!
4. **Don't wear sunglasses or hoods.** Direct eye contact helps you establish communication and builds trust.
5. **Maintain your position!** As a sidewalk counselor, you want to be where you have the best view of people coming and going while having room to engage the people going in. Remain vigilant. If you are the prayer partner, you will stand back from the sidewalk counselor so you do not intimidate the client.
6. **Stick to the mission.** You are peaceful, prayerful, helpful, joyful and appealing, attempting to win the person over to your side and recognizing that everyone involved in abortion is a victim. Exude confidence. Be serious and focus on the task at hand, avoiding socialization where possible. When you are not actively sidewalk counseling, you are in prayer or studying your materials, fortifying your efforts.
7. **Congratulate the woman who turns away from the abortion facility** and connect her with the help you promised her.
8. **You are representative of the pro-life movement and Christians.** Represent well.



## What NOT to Do

1. Don't carry harsh signs. All signs should be away from the counselor. Don't protest while counseling.
2. Don't step on private property, including abortion facility property even if you are beckoned by a client or staff of the facility. It could be a setup. Stay on the sidewalk.
3. Don't approach clients with a hellfire and brimstone tone. Don't yell or condemn.
4. Don't block the sidewalk or driveway to the abortion facility. You must allow others to move freely.
5. Don't focus on evangelization if you haven't yet engaged the client. You must first win her trust.
6. Don't interrupt another sidewalk counselor.
7. Don't step away from a sidewalk counseling session to help another person.
8. Don't expect visible rewards or to feel successful on the sidewalk.
9. Don't argue, especially after a client says she is not interested.
10. Don't get arrested.



## Be Prepared: A sidewalk counselor's checklist

\_\_\_ **Prayer.** Have you asked the Holy Spirit for guidance in the words you will speak? Remember, this is not all on you. Put on the armor of Christ out there.

\_\_\_ **Materials.** Do you have some or all of the following: Pregnancy help center information, pictures of fetal development, abortion procedure information, contraception information, lawsuit information, Rachel's Vineyard information, fetal models?

\_\_\_ **Find a partner.** You'll want prayer support out there.

\_\_\_ **Know your materials** and be prepared with a few "talking points." You might only have a few seconds so be ready to make them worth it.

\_\_\_ **Know your pregnancy help center.** Know the hours, location and services of the closest pregnancy help center to which you will be referring women.

\_\_\_ **Know your limits.** Some sidewalk counselors are only comfortable talking to women. Others are willing to offer rides, loan their phones, have lunch or coffee together or take a more involved role with the woman. Any level of involvement is fine, but know ahead of time what you're willing to do.

\_\_\_ **Know about fetal development.** You don't need to be an expert. Just memorize two or three facts you can share when appropriate.

\_\_\_ **Dress presentably and for the weather.** Wisconsin weather is unpredictable. Come prepared.

\_\_\_ **Know your rights on the sidewalk.** You can be on the sidewalk and terrace/parkway without blocking entrance into the parking lot and without setting down items/signs on the ground.

## A Final Word of Encouragement

When the stakes are so high, it can be easy to get discouraged—especially when your efforts don't prevent a woman from having an abortion. But remember that sidewalk counseling rarely prevents a woman from going to her abortion appointment. Your role is to help her consider alternatives—alternatives she might choose to pursue only after going in for her initial consultation. As long as the abortion hasn't yet happened, your conversation has the potential to save a life. We simply might never know whether our efforts "worked" on this side of Heaven.

It's easy to gauge our success by the number of "saves" we record. But we're not looking to pile up statistics or polish up our pro-life resumes. Each encounter—successful or not—is an interaction with a mother and child in need of our love.

In any case, don't despair. Your presence on the sidewalks is part of a greater effort in your community. Many seemingly fruitless hours can be spent counseling. But these seemingly fruitless hours make it possible for that wonderful hour when a mother is empowered to choose life. Whether or not you're the one manning the sidewalks that glorious day doesn't detract from your role.

And, as Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta stated, we're called to be faithful, not successful. That's why Pro-Life Wisconsin's Madison affiliate (Vigil for Life of Madison) chose John the Apostle as its patron. As the





only apostle who remained at the foot of the Cross during the Lord's Crucifixion, John was powerless to prevent the violence done to Christ. But he was there in love.

So remember—even when a mother chooses abortion, and you feel like you've failed, your efforts sidewalk counseling might be the only act of love that child received in her all-too-short time on this earth.

## Sidewalk Counseling Resources

### Counseling Tips and Techniques

CrisisPregnancies.org: [CrisisPregnancies.org](http://CrisisPregnancies.org) is Pro-Life Wisconsin's interactive mobile phone website that allows you to access ultrasound images, fetal heartbeat sounds, pregnancy help center locations, fetal development information and information on the harms of abortion and contraception.

SidewalkCounseling.com –Various Methods: <http://www.sidewalkcounseling.com/>

Pro-Life Action League Method (Chicago Method): <http://prolifeaction.org/sidewalk/>

Helpers of God's Precious Infants (Helpers Method): <http://www.helpersbrooklynny.org/>

### Legal

Alliance Defense Fund: [AllianceDefendFund.org](http://AllianceDefendFund.org); 800-TELL-ADF (835-5233)

Thomas More Society: [ThomasMoreSociety.org](http://ThomasMoreSociety.org); info@thomasmoresociety.org; 312-782-1680

American Center for Law and Justice: [aclj.org](http://aclj.org); 757-226-2489

