

A pair of hands, one from the left and one from the right, are shown holding a bright red heart. The hands are positioned as if presenting the heart. The background is a light, slightly blurred white. Overlaid on the image is the text "Medical v. Loving?" in a large, black, serif font. The word "Medical" is at the top, "v." is in the middle, and "Loving?" is at the bottom.

# *Medical v. Loving?*

In recent years there has been a large and successful effort to bring ultrasounds into Pregnancy Care Centers. The results have been dramatic. Centers are seeing increased numbers of abortion vulnerable women, increased conversions from abortion minded to women who choose life, and an increased profile in their medical and professional community. Without a doubt, the conversion of PCCs to medical clinics has been a resounding success in the fight against abortion.

Unfortunately, this conversion has not always been implemented without losing other important programs. It is very common that, when a center is considering going medical, they feel that they must choose between ultrasound programs or support programs. In fact, a colleague of ours recently reported that she has seen many centers decide to focus on their medical programs and to drop programs that provide parenting information and material support. While it seems good to focus on one thing and do it well, in reality the selection of medical programs over support programs is a harmful false choice.

The world is dotted with professional medical pregnancy care centers that also have a loving and supportive parenting program. These centers have found that the programs do not only coexist well, but they actually work together to create a larger impact on the abortion vulnerable women in their community. Through friend and neighbor referrals their abortion vulnerable numbers grow and their ability to offer support after the decision has increased their conversion rates. The decision they made to keep their parenting/support programs along side their medical emphasis has saved and changed thousands of lives.

The decision to keep both medical and parenting/support programs can be difficult and sometimes controversial. Here are just a few of the many reasons why keeping both is vital to the success of the pro-life PCC ministries:

## **1. Increased Abortion Vulnerable Clients**

Having support/parenting programs is some of the best advertising you can do. Your clients will share their experiences and reach out to their friends and families that find themselves in difficult pregnancies. They will provide information of your clinic and the love and concern you have shown to them to those in dire need of your service. This personal real-time contact will always be much more effective than mass cold-contact advertising. This is more than simply academic. Centers who use such programs together have found their abortion vulnerable numbers increasing right along side their support and parenting numbers.



## 2. Offering Support with the Choice

Fifty-five percent of women say they have abortions because they feel unready for a baby or because they don't believe they can afford a baby.<sup>1</sup> Parenting and Life-Skills programs answer this exact need. Your programs can give confidence to women who otherwise would be unsure of their choice to keep the baby. They can also help some mothers see the need to adopt. These programs give your clients a supported choice where they know that you will be right there with them in their need.

## 3. Breaking the Cycle

The CDC reports that almost 50% of women who have abortions will have another abortion within their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> By providing training programs that give parenting advice and prenatal information your center can help create a family environment that may prevent future abortions. The skills and information you impart will, in some cases, have generational impacts as the women you help raise children who are emotionally healthier and hearing about the choice of life from their mothers. Having parenting and support programs will not just help your client, but it will have a multi-generational impact.

## 4. Community Wide Support and Donations

Community and business leaders who may not generously support direct pro-life actions are much more likely to give to centers that have parenting and support programs. While you should not choose your mission based on its marketability, it is still important to have donors that are helping you keep your doors open. If you can participate in projects that are both positively viewed by big donors and that are making a true difference in the life of women and unborn children than you will be doing great work with community wide support.

## 5. Doing What is Right

The women who visit PCCs are truly in need of more than help at that moment. Offering them lasting parenting training and support can be difficult and tough, but it can be done. It does take more room, it does take more work, but it does make more of a life-changing difference.

At Heritage House, we have the unique position of being able to support all types of Pregnancy Care Centers. Every one of them is sincerely trying to do what is best to save and change lives. If your PCC has made a choice in the past to be medical only, perhaps now is a great time to look again at that decision. If you are facing that choice right now, carefully consider the importance of both programs and how they work together for success. If you have already chosen to keep both medical and support programs, thank you for looking at the big picture and supporting women and children from conception, to birth, and beyond.

Sincerely,

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Sources: 1. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Surveillance Summaries November 28, 2008, Vol. 57, No. SS-13. Found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5713.pdf> accessed 10/25/2010. 2. Lawrence Finer, et. al, "Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives" Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Vol. 37 No. 3 (Sept., 2005) p. 110.