



## **VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

I accept the responsibility to act as an advocate on behalf of the women under my care, to give accurate information, emotional support, and spiritual guidance. All information on Caris clients will be kept in the strictest confidence. I will continue to keep the information confidential even after I am no longer a volunteer.

I hereby certify that I have never been arrested for or convicted of any felony or misdemeanor involving sexual or physical abuse of any adult or child, or any felony narcotics offense.

## **WAIVER, RELEASE, AGREEMENT TO HOLD HARMLESS**

I fully understand and agree to assume all risks involved in any and all duties that I perform in a volunteer capacity in connection with the Caris Pregnancy Counseling and Resources ("Caris"). I understand that Caris does not perform background checks on its clients. I agree to waive, release and fully hold harmless Caris, its affiliates, directors, officers, employees or agents thereof for any and all claims for any injury(s), including, but not limited to, loss or damage to real or personal property or bodily injury caused by or resulting from the actions of Caris clients.

I understand that this waiver precludes me and all of my family members and descendants from forever seeking any legal action whatsoever against Caris, its affiliates, directors, officers, employees or agents thereof resulting from any injury(s) suffered by me during the course of providing volunteer services to Caris clients.

## **CARIS STATEMENT OF FAITH**

- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His atoning death through His shed blood, in His resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe that we all have gone our own way and are lost without God; that new birth by the Holy Spirit is essential for restoring our relationship with God both here and for eternity; and that this salvation is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit who indwells all Christians and enables us to live a life pleasing to God.
- We believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Adapted from the National Association of Evangelicals' Statement of Faith*



## CARIS STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

- Caris, embodied in its volunteers and staff, is committed to living out the good news of Jesus, both in word and in deed. Caris Board members, staff and volunteers must adhere to the organization's statement of faith and be committed to a personal relationship with Christ. Caris staff and volunteers are also committed to a Christ-honoring, biblical lifestyle in all areas, including sexual purity.
- Caris is committed to supporting women facing unplanned pregnancies by providing professional counseling and connection to available church and community resources. We are committed to helping women build ongoing infrastructures of holistic support. This includes emotional support through our support groups, practical support through our community and church connections, and spiritual support through relationships with volunteers. We are committed to engaging churches and community agencies to provide the emotional support and practical resources a woman needs to have hope regarding her unplanned pregnancy.
- Caris sees and understands that there are complex circumstances, cultural stigmas and social injustices that contribute to the issue of unplanned pregnancy and abortion. We greatly empathize with pregnant women in the unique pressures they face. Because we believe abortion is a harmful and negative solution for both women and children, we are committed to meeting the needs of each pregnant woman, so she can be empowered to continue her pregnancy.
- Caris is committed to acting with integrity and treating women with respect and dignity. Caris will provide promised information and services, including medically accurate and complete, unbiased information regarding all pregnancy options. We are committed to truthfulness in our individual conversations and corporate advertising.
- Caris provides services to clients from any race, creed, income, national origin, age, geographic residence or marital status.
- Caris offers services free of charge at all times.
- Caris staff and volunteers, in their capacity as such, do not endorse political candidates, articulate a political stance, or engage in protest activities.
- Caris recognizes adoption as an empowering option for a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy. Caris is independent of any adoption agencies and relates to them in the same manner as to other referral sources.
- Caris does not recommend, provide, or refer for abortions. When clients want more information about abortion, we recommend they speak to their medical provider. Caris commits to supporting each woman regardless of the choice she makes about her pregnancy.



## THE CARIS APPROACH™

Caris is a faith-based, nonprofit organization providing hope and support to women facing unplanned pregnancies in the Chicago area. Through free services, including professional counseling, accurate information and ongoing relationships, Caris provides the emotional support and practical resources that allow women to begin to consider alternatives to abortion. The Caris Approach of Commitment, Counseling and Connection is a Christian grassroots and nonpartisan solution to what can be a divisive issue.

***Our Commitment - to advocate for both the woman and the child, recognizing that God is equally committed to, and has a plan for, the welfare of both***

As a Christian organization, we have two core beliefs around the issue of abortion:

- I. We believe that God is for both the woman and the child involved in an unplanned pregnancy. He treats both with dignity, and we commit to do the same. We acknowledge how difficult the situation is for the woman and work for her need to have hope for the future. As we support her, we also work for the well-being of the child. (Psalm 139: 13, 16; Psalm 68:5, Jer. 29:11)
- II. We believe that, like other issues of social justice, God's plan involves Christians being His hands and feet, showing compassion and getting directly involved in being part of the solution. (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17, Isaiah 61:1)

We view abortion as an act of injustice to both women and children. Most of the women we see at Caris don't choose abortion as an easy or unfeeling decision, but rather out of a place of desperation, truly believing there is no other option available to them. The majority of our clients who are considering abortion say to their counselor, "I don't want to end this pregnancy. I just see no other way out." When a woman feels so trapped by her circumstances that she would go against her own desires or values to end her pregnancy, it is not justice for her or for her child.

Therefore, we are committed to coming alongside pregnant women and helping them overcome the obstacles that would keep them from choosing parenting or adoption. We believe the answer is not to try and talk women out of choosing abortion, but rather to offer them support, professional counseling and tangible resources in order to provide them with another option. In doing so, we empower and give hope to those women who really do want to continue their pregnancy, but feel they just can't in their current situation. Of the women who walk into Caris who are pregnant and considering abortion, 2 out of 3 of them will choose parenting or adoption after receiving our services.

According to national statistics, 3 out of 4 women who choose abortion cite the lack of emotional support and the lack of practical resources as their top reasons for making this decision<sup>1</sup> and every year, about 22,000 women in Cook County end their pregnancy. So we have to ask ourselves, is it possible that the majority of these women could make a different decision if they felt they had enough support? Imagine the difference this could make in our community. We are committed to this type of change and believe that as Christians come together to advocate for both the woman and the child, this vision can become a reality.

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<sup>1</sup> The Guttmacher Institute. (2005). Reasons U.S. women have abortions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives. 37 (3). New York: Finer, L. B. & Frohworth, L.



## THE CARIS APPROACH™

***Our Counseling - to help a woman navigate the complex emotions surrounding an unplanned pregnancy, recognizing that a positive pregnancy test can initiate instantaneous emotional derailment***

Our research has shown that for many women facing an unplanned pregnancy, getting the results of a positive pregnancy test is like hearing a diagnosis of a terminal illness<sup>2</sup>. She cannot see a positive outcome for either her future or the future of her child.

Because of these and other complex issues often surrounding an unplanned pregnancy, we believe professional counseling is the most important service we provide at our four sites. Our counselors are there with her when a woman receives a positive pregnancy test and can help her through the initial feelings of isolation, panic and shame. After our counselors meet her where she is at emotionally and help her process her feelings, we can begin to offer the positive alternatives that are available to her.

***“She’s not here to judge me, just to help me, which was nice because it was very sincere. I could tell by the tone in her voice, the expression on her face. My counselor at Caris was welcoming arms.”***

***“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...” Isaiah 61:1***

***Our Connection - to help a woman build infrastructures for ongoing support, recognizing that for her, the decision about her pregnancy is just the beginning***

We offer every pregnant woman connections to ongoing emotional support and practical resources through Caris support groups, Christian volunteers, other community agencies, and local churches. We believe that God is calling His people to be His hands and feet and offer practical support for women and children at-risk for abortion. Therefore, we offer specific Connection programs where Christian volunteers can bless our clients through “adopting” support groups, collecting practical baby supplies, and hosting baby showers. Our ultimate desire is to see women connected to local churches where they can experience the love of God and be in relationship with authentic and compassionate Christians.

***“They help even afterwards. I love that. When you know someone else cares, like Caris, you know you can accomplish things. Like you can do it.”***

***“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord...’plans to give you a hope and a future.’” Jeremiah 29:11***

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<sup>2</sup> Brandtrust, Inc. (2008). Emotional Inquiry, Caris Pregnancy Counseling and Resources