



Women's Law Project
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WLP Statement on Public Complaint Urging Pennsylvania Officials to Investigate Anti-Abortion “Crisis Pregnancy Center” Data Collection & Privacy Practices

Consumers have a reasonable expectation of privacy regarding sensitive health data and deserve to be protected

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PENNSYLVANIA // April 23, 2024 – Today, Campaign for Accountability [filed](#) public complaints in Idaho, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington calling for an investigation into anti-abortion “crisis pregnancy center” data collection and privacy practices.

Specifically, Campaign for Accountability asserts Options Women’s Center, an anti-abortion organization based in Scranton has been obtaining women’s sensitive personal and health data while making misleading representations about its legal obligations regarding confidentiality in violation of Pennsylvania’s Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law.

CPCs are anti-abortion organizations that target low-income people experiencing unintended pregnancies, low-income new parents, and teenagers to prevent them from accessing abortion and contraception.

Read the complaint [here](#).

“We echo the call for state officials to protect Pennsylvanians’ sensitive health data from being collected under misleading assurances of confidentiality,” said WLP Co-Executive Director Amal Bass. “We’re increasingly seeing CPC websites post jibberish privacy statements and sometimes invoking the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), even though CPCs are typically not medical providers and therefore not subject to HIPAA. But most people don’t know that, which is of course the point.”

Like many CPCs in Pennsylvania and across the country, Options Women’s Center is affiliated with anti-abortion CPC steering organizations Care Net and Heartbeat International. Heartbeat International develops [what privacy experts call “data exploitation technologies” and collects “digital dossiers”](#) on people who have interacted with CPCs.

Digital data has been used to [support](#) pregnancy-related prosecutions. At least one CPC has [shared client data with law enforcement](#) to support the prosecution of a pregnant person. She had no intention of pursuing an abortion and went to a CPC for a free ultrasound.

Consumers have a reasonable expectation of privacy in personal health information and would be unlikely to unknowingly provide that information to an organization that has misrepresented its confidentiality practices and/or legal obligations.

“We’re concerned for pregnant adults, but also about kids who unknowingly share their personal data with CPCs while looking for information online,” said Tara Murtha, Director of Strategic Communications at Women’s Law Project. “The anti-abortion movement is very open about targeting children. According to their own privacy statements, CPCs collect invasive personal information on kids as young as 13 years old. How would a kid answering medical-sounding questions asked by an adult representing a place with an image of medical personnel on the homepage know their health data is not legally protected? Where does their data go, how long is it stored, who is it shared with, and for what purpose?”

At least 156 CPCs are known to be operating in Pennsylvania. Given the serious threats anti-abortion “crisis pregnancy centers” pose to consumer health data privacy in Pennsylvania, Women’s Law Project urges Attorney General Michelle Henry to take immediate action to protect Pennsylvanians and people who travel to Pennsylvania seeking healthcare. Pennsylvania officials must investigate the health data collection and privacy practices of Options Women’s Center and its parent organizations, educate the public about CPC privacy practices, and take all necessary action to prevent CPCs from deceiving consumers about who is collecting their data, how it is being shared, and how it is being used.

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