



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catholic Prayer at Abortion Clinics

The Catholic presence outside abortion clinics/referral centers should be centered on prayer: for the unborn child, its parents and family, and for the clinic staff. This prayerful presence constitutes an important ministry of pastoral care.

In keeping with the pastoral spirit of the ministry, Catholics engaged in prayer outside abortion clinics should observe the following protocols:

1. Individuals and groups engaged in prayer should maintain a reasonable physical distance from persons engaged in Sidewalk Advocacy. This practice allows Sidewalk Advocates to fully engage with women and families and avoids any appearance of crowding or intimidating persons entering the clinic.
2. Individuals acting as Sidewalk Advocates should undergo training with the Archdiocese (or Archdiocesan-approved program) prior to engaging in advocacy ministry. Contact the Archdiocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities for information about approved resources. Sidewalk advocates must be at least 18 years of age.
3. The Catholic presence should constitute a prayerful witness and outreach, not a demonstration, political or otherwise. Archdiocesan advocacy for public policy or legislative change is conducted at other venues. Any conduct which could reasonably be construed as sloganeering, verbal confrontation, harassment, public shaming, etc. are unacceptable and not in keeping with these guidelines.
4. Because the Catholic presence is not focused on demonstration, the use of signs and posters should be kept to an absolute minimum; signage can distract from the prayerful nature of the event. One or two signs (per group) advertising available pregnancy and parenting help or abortion healing are acceptable. The display of religious images (e.g., a Crucifix, image of Our Lady of Guadalupe) is also consistent with these guidelines.
5. Catholics are asked to maintain a physical distance from others at clinics whose conduct is contrary to these guidelines. On rare occasions, clinic staff or volunteers or other assembled groups have become aggressive towards persons assembled for prayer. The Archdiocese recommends Catholics pray in groups of at least 2 or 3 persons and remain aware of their surroundings during prayer gatherings.