Project Gabriel

Manual and Parish Resources
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Part I – Organizing Your Parish Gabriel Project

1. Mission Statement

The Gabriel Project is a pro-life parish-based apostolate of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston offering assistance to women experiencing difficult circumstances during pregnancy. Gabriel Project volunteers act to provide practical advice and help as well as spiritual support and Christian witness to mothers in need.

2. Getting Started

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston coordinates the Gabriel Project with the Office of Pro-Life Activities. If there is interest in starting a Gabriel Project chapter in your parish, please contact the Pro-Life Activities Office at 713.741.8728.

Important steps in getting started:

1. **Obtain Pastor approval.** Because every parish has different needs and ministries, it is important to obtain permission from the pastor before starting a Gabriel Project chapter in a parish. One important consideration to discuss with the Pastor will be the place of the Gabriel Project in the parish budget. The Office of Pro-Life Activities will work with interested volunteers to apprise the pastor and parish staff of the needs and activities associated with becoming a Gabriel parish.

2. **Locate interested volunteers.** Depending on the size of the parish and the needs of the surrounding community, the number of volunteers needed will vary. It is recommended that the parish begin with a Coordinator and at least two Gabriel Angels. Your parish may wish to add volunteers as the program grows.

3. **Meet with other parish ministries.** Other parish ministries can be a great help to the Gabriel Project. The Knights of Columbus, Parish Social Ministries/St. Vincent de Paul chapters and parish Women’s groups may all be able to assist with various needs. As you are getting started, consider reaching out to these groups to let them know your plans and to discuss how you can work together. Consider reaching out to parish youth and senior groups for volunteer assistance.

4. **Obtaining resources for mothers.** Material items for young infants will be needed before you begin advertising the program. Inform your parish that a Gabriel Project is starting and consider hosting a Kick-Off Baby shower to obtain a good supply of needed items prior to opening your doors to expectant mothers. Ideas for hosting a parish Baby Shower are included in Appendix F at the back of this manual.

5. **Advertising.** You will want to obtain a sign for the outside of the parish to let the public know this is a location where expectant mothers can receive assistance. This can be obtained through
the Office of Pro-Life Activities. Additional advertising materials are available through Pro-Life Activities. Consider taking these materials to local businesses and community centers. Place information about the Gabriel Project in the parish bulletin, website and social media platforms.

**3. Choosing Gabriel Project Volunteers**

Due to the sometimes difficult nature of working with women in crisis, we recommend that those volunteering with the Gabriel Project have the following characteristics:

- Be a Catholic in good standing;
- Be a member of the parish in which they will volunteer;
- Have a strong prayer life;
- Be familiar with and accepting of Church teaching on marriage, family and contraception.

The roles of the parish Gabriel Project Coordinator and Gabriel Angels are outlined as follows:

**The Gabriel Coordinator** receives parish referrals from Gabriel telephone volunteers and assigns new expectant mothers to Gabriel Angels. She may also work directly with mothers as their Angel. She coordinates the acceptance of donations for baby items, reaches out to the Office of Pro-Life Activities when additional items are needed and directs Project advertising within the parish. It is up to the Coordinator to ensure that all Gabriel Angels have received VIRTUS certification (see below) and to maintain records of the same. Specific duties of the Coordinator may include:

- Know and be familiar with the strengths of each Gabriel angel;
- Match each referred mother to an angel;
- Advise the angels of meetings and trainings at the parish and Archdiocese levels;
- Communicate with the Pastor, parish office and other parish ministries;
- Encourage collaboration with other parish ministries
- Communicate regularly with angels concerning mothers they are assisting;
- Maintain confidentiality of the mothers served by the parish

**The Gabriel Angel** works directly with pregnant mothers in a role of mentorship and friendship. With the assistance of the Coordinator, as needed, she will work prayerfully with the mother to assess her needs and offer friendship, prayer and material assistance. Specific duties of the Angel may include:

- Responding to her assigned mother promptly (within 24 hours)
- Checking up on her regularly via telephone and in-person meetings
- Keeping the mother in daily prayer
- Assisting the mother to access services
- Communicating with the parish Gabriel Coordinator
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the mother(s) assigned to her

*IMPORTANT - All volunteers who will meet with expectant mothers must be VIRTUS certified. Although the program is not directed to minors, your parish may be called on to assist a pregnant minor. At other times, a mother may bring her other minor children to an appointment at the parish. You need to be VIRTUS certified to assist these individuals. Please see the Archdiocesan website at [www.archgh.org/safeenvironment/](http://www.archgh.org/safeenvironment/) for more information.*
4. **Gabriel Intake Procedures**

**Initial Telephone Contact:** A mother in need should first contact the Gabriel Project Telephone Line at (713) 225-5826.

- The telephone volunteer will complete the initial intake form (See Appendix A) and determine which Gabriel parish is closest to the mother’s current residence.

**Referral to Gabriel Parish:**

- Once this initial intake is completed, the telephone volunteer will contact the Gabriel Coordinator at the appropriate parish and provide her with the completed intake form.

- The Gabriel Coordinator should review the intake form and assign a Gabriel angel for the new mother. Some Gabriel Coordinators may wish to schedule an initial meeting with a mother first or attend the first meeting between a mom and her assigned Angel

**Assignment and Follow-up**

- It is up to the assigned Angel (or the parish Coordinator, in appropriate circumstances) to make the initial contact with the mother and arrange a first meeting.

- It is important that all matters relating to your mother be kept confidential. Her name, identifying information and details of her circumstances should not be disclosed to individuals outside your parish Gabriel Project. On rare occasions, the Gabriel Program Coordinator and/or the Office of Pro-Life Activities may become involved. The only exceptions will involve reporting suspected abuse (See FAQs).

- Initial meetings will involve an assessment of needs

**The Importance of Prayer**

- The Gabriel Project is founded on the importance of maintaining a strong prayer life and keeping our mothers and children in prayer. If your mom is comfortable, it is a great idea to begin and end your meetings with her in prayer. If space/time permits, you might consider taking her to the Church or chapel at your parish.

Some women are not comfortable with prayer and would prefer not to pray with their Gabriel Angel. If this is the case, there are many other ways you can assist her. It is important that her Gabriel Angel and the entire Gabriel team continue to keep her in daily prayer.

Because the problems our mothers are facing are frequently severe and varied, it is easy for volunteers to become overwhelmed and frustrated. To avoid this, it is essential that each volunteer maintains a strong and consistent habit of daily prayer.

**Working with Other Parish Ministries**

PDF version
It is a good idea to involve other parish ministries in the Gabriel Project. Some ideas for collaboration include:

- **Knights of Columbus.** If your parish has a K of C chapter, this can be an excellent resource for assistance in fundraising, set-up and take down at Gabriel events or help with transporting baby items donated between one parish and another.

- **Parish Social Ministry/St. Vincent de Paul chapter.** Many times the mothers we work with need more assistance than the Gabriel Project can provide. Depending on a mother’s need, you may consider contacting your Parish Social Ministry or St. Vincent de Paul chapter.

- **Women’s/Men’s/Seniors groups.** The Gabriel Project is grounded in the importance of prayer. You may consider asking members of these parish groups to pray for a Gabriel mother. **If you choose this option, make sure not to provide a name or identifying information, in order to maintain confidentiality.**

- **Youth/Catechetical groups.** Help the kids get involved in fundraising and helping to host a Gabriel Project baby shower or other events. Ask them to assist with promotional materials and in prayer.

### 5. Additional Resources for Baby Items

1. Some parishes naturally receive more referrals due to the needs of the surrounding community. Similarly, other parishes will have more resources to obtain baby items for moms in need than will other parishes. As a parish-based apostolate, it is appropriate that parishes share donated items with one another. This type of sharing of resources has been very successful.

   If your parish is in need of items for a Gabriel mother, please contact the Office of Pro-Life Activities. We can in turn reach out to all other Gabriel parishes. In most circumstances, we can obtain the needed items in a short period of time.

2. The Archdiocese also retains space at the St. Dominic Center, Morkovsky Hall, 2403 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77021 for storing baby items. If you are interested in obtaining from this resource, please contact **Ruth Lira** at **281.450.2190** to arrange a time to pick up needed items.

3. In the event you are unable to obtain needed items from either of these resources, please contact the Office of Pro-Life Activities. Items may be purchased by the Archdiocese on a limited basis depending on parish need.
6. Important Safety Considerations

Most Gabriel volunteers are involved in this ministry out of a loving concern for our mothers and a strong desire to give of self. Nonetheless, it is important to establish prudent boundaries between parish volunteers and the expectant mothers assisted by the Gabriel Project. Because the mothers we assist frequently suffer with a variety of difficulties, it is not unusual for them to be involved in relationships or activities that are unhealthy. The Office of Pro-Life Activities recommends Gabriel Project volunteers adhere to the following guidelines to the extent possible in order to maintain their safety and that of other parishioners.

• Where possible, arrange meetings with your mother at the parish during business hours when other parish staff are present. We ask that volunteers avoid making trips to the mother’s residence or other locations determined by the mother and unknown to the volunteer.

• It is acceptable and recommended to attend doctor’s appointments or social services appointments with your mother. We recommend that you meet your mother at the appointment location and avoid driving her in your own car.

• Where possible, consider contacting your mother from a parish telephone rather than from your cell phone. A variety of personal information can be obtained online with nothing except your name and cell phone number.

• Similarly, avoid providing a significant amount of personal information in the course of your conversations, such as your home address or your children’s names or school information.

• Remember that the Gabriel Project is not an emergency service. At times, you may be unable to return a call or email from your mother for a 24-hour period, or even longer. Mom should be advised to call emergency services in the case of a life-threatening emergency.
7. **Important Contacts**

Downtown Chancery
713.659.5461
1700 San Jacinto
Houston, TX 77002-8291

St. Dominic Chancery
713.741-8730
2403 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, TX 77021-2098

Office of Pro-Life Activities
713.741.8728
jkfritsch@archgh.org
respectlife@archgh.org

Cathy McConn – Gabriel Project Coordinator
713.598.1675
cathymcconn@me.com

Ruth Lira – Maternal Assistance Coordinator/Morkovsky Hall
281.450.2190
rlira@att.net
Part II – Community Partners/Resources
For Mothers in Need

1. Housing & Shelters - Catholic

**Casa Juan Diego**
P.O. Box 70113, Houston, TX 77270
713.869.7376
Catholic Worker House serving immigrant and refugee Spanish-speaking battered or pregnant women and their children.

**Angela House**
6725 Reed Road, Houston, TX 77087
281.445.9797
Transitional housing for women released from incarceration.

**Magnificat Houses, Inc.**
3209 Austin St., Houston, TX 77288
713-529-4231
magnificathousesinc.org
Organization has a number of facilities, primarily serving the mentally ill, but will help others in need as well. In addition to the main office, the following Magnificat locations may be able to assist Gabriel mothers:

- **Anawim;** 5420 Sherman St.; 713.223.5252
  Community women’s residence
- **Duchesne;** 5708 Sherman; 713.928.8972
  Residence for women
- **Myriam’s Hostel;** 2009 Congress; 713.224.1373
  Emergency overnight shelter for women

**Santa Maria Hostel, Inc.**
2605 Parker Rd., Houston TX 77093
713.691.0900
2005 Jacqueline, Houston, TX 77055
713.957.2413
santamariahostel.org
Provides residential treatment for women in need of substance abuse treatment. Will accept pregnant or postpartum mothers.

**Wellsprings 713-529-6559**
Transitional residence for homeless and/or abused women between the ages of 25-50 who are capable of full-time employment.
2. Housing & Shelters – Non-Catholic

**Covenant House**  
1111 Lovett Blvd., Houston, TX 77006  
713-523-2231  
covenanthousetx.org  
Provides housing for pregnant women ages 18-20 and their babies.

**Star of Hope**  
6897 Ardmore, Houston, TX 77084  
713-748-0700  
sohmission.org  
Transitional living for women with children or pregnant women. Assists with substance abuse treatment, education and living skills.

**Life House**  
P.O. Box 27127, Houston, TX 77227  
713-623-2120  
lifehousehouston.org  
Residential facility for pregnant women and babies. Focuses on teenagers and women in their early 20s.

**The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc.**  
3811 Allen-Genoa Rd, Pasadena, TX 77504  
713.472.0753  
thebridgeovertroubledwaters.org  
Provides emergency shelter and transitional housing options for women and children victims of domestic violence. Assists with counseling and legal services surrounding domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Gracewood**  
1617 Elmwood  
Houston, TX 77080-7222  
713.988.9757  
gracewood.org  
Residential and counseling program for women with at least one child who are capable of working or attending school. Mom cannot be pregnant upon entry, but this may be an option for women after giving birth.
3. Additional Assistance – Catholic

The St. Vincent de Paul Society offers a variety of resources including food, clothing and limited monetary assistance. St. Vincent de Paul Conferences are organized into Districts by geographic location. Upon referral, Vincentians will make home visits with their clients to determine particular needs. The level of assistance that can be offered is largely dependent on the resources and policies of the individual Conference.

Parishes with St. Vincent de Paul Conferences

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 1</th>
<th>District 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>Guardian Angel – Wallis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our Mother of Mercy</td>
<td>Holy Family – Missouri City</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Anne de Beaupre</td>
<td>Holy Rosary – Rosenberg</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>St. John Neumann</td>
<td>Missouri City</td>
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<td>St. Leo the Great</td>
<td>St. John Fisher –</td>
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<td>St. Martha – Kingwood</td>
<td>St. Mark the Evangelist</td>
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<td>St. Monica</td>
<td>St. Michael – Needville</td>
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<td>St. Rose of Lima</td>
<td>St. Theresa – Sugarland</td>
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<tr>
<th>District 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Albert</td>
<td>All Saints</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Francis de Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Francis Xavier</td>
<td>Epiphany of the Lord – Katy</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Mary of the Purification</td>
<td>St. Ambrose</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Michael</td>
<td>St. Bartholomew – Katy</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Philip Neri</td>
<td>St. Cecilia</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Raphael the Archangel</td>
<td>St. Elizabeth Ann Seton</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Thomas More</td>
<td>St. Jerome</td>
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<tr>
<td>713.771.3596</td>
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<td>713.781.9511</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>713.729.0221</td>
<td>713.648.9555</td>
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### District 5
- Blessed Sacrament: 713.224.5291
- Holy Rosary – Midtown: 713.529.4854
- Sacred Heart – Crosby: 281.328.4871
- St. Andrew – Channelview: 281.452.9865
- St. Anne: 713.526.3276
- St. Hyacinth – Deer Park: 281.479.4298
- St. Martin de Porres – Barrett Station: 281.3284451

### District 6
- Sacred Heart – Conroe: 936.756.8186
- St. Anne – Tomball: 281.351.8106
- St. Anthony of Padua – The Woodlands: 281.296.2800
- St. Joseph – New Waverly: 936.344.6104
- St. Mary – Plantersville: 936.894.2223
- St. Simon and Jude – The Woodlands: 281.367.9885
- St. Thomas the Apostle – Huntsville: 409.295.8159

### District 7
- Holy Family – Galveston: 409.762.9646
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help/ St. John the Apostle: 979.548.2020
- Shrine of the True Cross – Dickinson: 281.337.4112
- St. Helen – Pearland: 281.485.2421
- St. Jerome – Clute: 979.265.5179
- St. Mary of the Miraculous Medal – Texas City: 409.948.8448
- St. Mary Star of the Sea – Freeport: 979.233.5271
- St. Michael – Lake Jackson: 979.297.3041
- St. Paul the Apostle – Nassau Bay: 281.333.3891

### St. Vincent DePaul Resale Stores
These stores offer clothing and household items at reduced prices. If a mother is in need of these items, she may be eligible for the Voucher Program through St. Vincent de Paul. If your parish does not have a SVdP Conference, you may wish to refer your mother to the nearest parish with a SVdP Conference for assessment of her needs.

- 6654 Gulf Freeway, Houston, TX 77087
  - Phone: (713) 862-2605
  - Tues.-Fri. 9:30am-5pm
  - Sat. 8:30am – 4pm
- 5236 Cedar Street, Bellaire, TX 77401
  - Phone: (713) 669-9410
  - Mon. 11:30am-7pm
  - Tues.-Sat. 9:30am-5pm

### Christus Our Daily Bread Day Shelter
[christusfoundation.org/programs/christus-our-daily-bread/](http://christusfoundation.org/programs/christus-our-daily-bread/)
- 2420 Winnie St., Galveston, TX 77550
  - Phone: 409.765.6972

Provides breakfast and lunch, clothing, hygiene items and mental health and job counseling to Galveston’s homeless population.
Blessed Beginnings
Blessed Beginnings offers assistance with life-skills, needed baby items and counseling needs for mothers and their children from birth to two years of age. This is a good resource for mothers needing additional assistance following the birth of their children. Call 713.874.6760 for additional information.

Counseling Services
Catholic Charities offers counseling services in English and Spanish to meet a variety of needs. While there is a fee for counseling services, the fees are assessed on a sliding scale. Therefore, services may be available for mothers assisted by the Gabriel Project.

Family Counseling Intake Line: 713.874.6590  866.649.5862
Director Intake Line: 713.874.6590
Ernesto Lopez, Jr., NCC, LPC-S

Counseling Service Locations:

Central Houston: Moran Health Center
2615 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77002

West Houston: St. John Vianney Catholic Comm’y, Social Ministry Office
625 Nottingham Oaks Trail, Houston, TX 77079

South Houston: Bay Area United Way Service Center
1300 Bay Area Blvd. #229, Houston, TX 77058

Fort Bend County: 12300 Parc Crest Dr., Stafford, TX 77477

North Houston: St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church
7810 Cypresswood Dr., Spring, TX 77379

Christ the Good Shepherd Catholic Church
18511 Klein Church Road, Spring, TX 7737
4. Additional Services – Special Issues

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

Fort. Bend County Women’s Center
905 3rd Street, Rosenberg, TX 77471
281.344.5750
fbwc.org

Houston Area Women’s Center
1010 Waugh Dr. Houston, TX 77019
713.528.6798
Domestic Violence Hotline: 713.528.2121
hcwc.org

Montgomery County Women’s Center
281.292.4338
936.441.7273 (The Woodlands)

Bay Area Turning Point
281.286.2525 (Webster)

Family Time Foundation
281.446.2615 (Humble)

Galveston Resources and Crisis Center
409.765.7233

Women’s Center of Brazoria County
979.849.9553 (Angleton)
800.243.5788 (Crisis Line)

Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Ctr
800.451.9235 (Bay City)

The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc.
3811 Allen-Genoa Rd, Pasadena, TX 77504
713.472.0753
thebridgeovertroubledwaters.org

LEGAL SERVICES – FAMILY LAW/IMMIGRATION

Legal Advocacy Project
713.224.9911
Assistance with domestic violence or family law issues for residents of Harris County

Harris County DA’s Office – Family Criminal Law Division
713.755.5888
Assists with filing Protective Orders for victims of domestic violence; crisis intervention counseling for domestic violence victims

Houston Volunteer Lawyers
713.228.0732
Assists eligible, low-income Harris County residents with family law issues

Catholic Charities Immigrant Legal Assistance
713.526.4611
Assists with residency applications under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

YMCA International Services
713.339.9015
Assists immigrant women interested in applying for residency. Also assists human trafficking victims.
Many of the mothers we work with may not have completed high school. Obtaining a G.E.D. (the equivalent of a high school diploma) is an essential step for many in becoming self-sufficient and obtaining sustainable employment and a living wage for their families.

In Texas, the G.E.D. exam can be taken in both English and Spanish. There are a variety of courses available to assist students in preparing for the G.E.D. exam. G.E.D. class locations can be found at www.mycareertools.com/houston-tx/.

The G.E.D. exam consists of 4 parts, including math, science, social studies and language arts. The subjects may be taken separately, for a fee of $33.75 each or together, for $135. Additional information about the exam can be located at the Houston Community College System website, www.hccs.edu/adult-education/take-the-ged/.

Many of the women we serve or their families may be interested in registering for ESL (English as a Second Language) classes or ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes. Information about ESL and ABE classes is available at the following locations:

- Literacy Advance
  www.literacyadvance.org

- Houston Community College System
  www.hccs.edu/continuing-education/departments/languages/esl

- Harris County Department of Education
  www.hcde-texas.org/who-we-are/divisions-and-leadership/adult-education/

**JOB TRAINING RESOURCES**

If a mother you work with or a member of her family is in need of employment assistance, Goodwill Industries of Houston is a good resource to provide job training and certification programs as well as placement assistance.

A list of Goodwill locations is available at www.goodwillhouston.org/services/job-connections-locations/. It is a good idea to call before visiting a particular location as some locations serve only specific populations (e.g. military veterans or persons with disabilities).
5. OTHER GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Many of the women we work with may be eligible for various forms of assistance, including SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) and WIC (women, infant and children) benefits.

**WIC**

Provides nutrition education, access to nutritious foods and breastfeeding support and (at some locations) vouchers for fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets.

**WIC eligibility**

- Pregnant women
- Women breastfeeding a baby age 0-12 months
- Mother 0 – 6 months after birth of child
- Women with children 0-5 years of age
- Income below specified levels depending on family size

**How to Apply for Benefits**

Applications must generally be made *in person*

Contact 1.800.WIC.FORU (1.800.942.3678), M-F 8am – 5pm to locate nearest WIC office. Mom will need to make an appointment at a clinic of her choice.

For more information about documents mom will need to bring to her WIC appointment, see: [http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wichd/gi/eligible.shtm](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/wichd/gi/eligible.shtm).

**SNAP**

Provides food subsidies for individuals meeting applicable requirements. To determine eligibility, Mom must apply for benefits and interview in person or over the telephone.

**SNAP eligibility** is determined according to:

- Texas residency
- Citizenship
- Level of employment
- Current resources and income

For more information about eligibility, or to make an online application for benefits, go to [http://www.YourTexasBenefits.com](http://www.YourTexasBenefits.com).

**ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE**

Many of the women we work with may also be eligible for additional benefits including TANF (temporary assistance to needy families), Medicaid, CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program) or other resources.
Pregnant women in Texas are eligible for Medicaid coverage if they fall below certain income limits, as are their children. Remember to ask if a mother has coverage during her pregnancy and – if she has other children – whether they are covered. If the family income is too great for Medicaid eligibility, help mom look into eligibility for CHIP benefits for her other children. Information can be located at [http://www.YourTexasBenefits](http://www.YourTexasBenefits).

In order to apply for Medicaid, a mother must have confirmed proof of pregnancy. If your mother does not have written confirmation of pregnancy, free pregnancy tests and proof of pregnancy can be obtained through Birthright International at one of the following locations in Houston. Additional information about hours at each location can be found at: [www.birthright.org](http://www.birthright.org).

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<th>Location 1</th>
<th>Location 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1300 S. Frazier, Suite 214</td>
<td>2189 Cypress Creek Parkway, Suite 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroe, TX 77301</td>
<td>Houston, TX 77090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>936.756.3220</td>
<td>281.440.4910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200 Blalock Rd., Suite 104</td>
<td>1502 1st Street, Suite F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, TX 77055</td>
<td>Humble, TX 77338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>713.465.4065</td>
<td>859.277.2635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Harris County Community Services Department**
8410 Lantern Point Dr., Annex M, Houston, TX 77054
713.578.2000
csd.hctx.net

Assistance with financial issues such as rent and utilities.

- **Please note:** Many providers listed in this reference guide are not Catholic. As such, it is always possible that they might refer or recommend to a mother certain procedures/behavior opposed to Catholic teaching (i.e. contraception, abortion, sterilization or other behaviors). At the same time, there may be circumstances in which a referral to one of these agencies is appropriate (e.g. your mother is a victim of ongoing domestic violence, needs government assistance for food, has no housing, etc.). Prior to providing such a referral, you may want to discuss Catholic teaching on issues of sexuality and procreation with your mother and offer help and advice about information she may receive.
6. Abortion Procedures & Post-Abortion Healing

A variety of abortion procedures are currently available to women in Texas, including:

a) Contraception as an abortifacient (1-2 weeks)
b) Medical Abortion (1-10 weeks)
c) Surgical Abortion (1-20 weeks)
d) Selective Reduction Abortion (20+ weeks)

Complications of Surgical Abortion procedures
Immediate complications of a surgical abortion may include:

1) hemorrhage
2) infection
3) perforation of the internal organs, including the bowel, bladder or uterus
4) damage to the cervix
5) incomplete abortion (with need for repeat procedure
6) in rare cases, death.

Risk of complications increases with gestational age.

Complications of Medical Abortion procedures
Medical abortion (in which drugs are used to induce abortion) involves the following risks:

1) hemorrhage
2) incomplete abortion (with necessity of subsequent surgical abortion)
3) infection

Risk of complications increases with gestational age.

Delayed Complications of Abortion
The incidence of subsequent physical complications following abortion is controversial and hotly contested by the abortion industry. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that the abortion procedure may lead to subsequent health problems including

1) increased incidence of subsequent stillbirth or miscarriage
2) decreased fertility
3) increased incidence of ectopic pregnancy.
4) depression or anxiety (ranging from mild to severe)
5) PAS (Post-Abortion Syndrome); mental problems, relationship problems, substance abuse, anti-social behaviors

If your ministry is working with a woman suffering after an abortion, resources are available to assist her. The Archdiocese offers a variety of retreats and support groups under the name Project Rachel. Your mother may also prefer to receive information about non-denominational support. Please contact the Office of Pro-Life Activities for additional resources if you would like to provide information to your mother.
Part III – Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs

1. **What if a mother comes to the parish Gabriel Project without a telephone referral?**

   Sometimes, a mother will see the Gabriel Project sign and come to the parish for assistance without first calling the Gabriel Line for a referral. At other times, she may be referred to you from your parish Social Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul conference or other parish ministry. Speak with your parish teams about the usual procedures for Gabriel program, including requesting that a mother call the Gabriel Line first to determine if her needs are within the scope of the Gabriel Project.

   If a mother comes to you without calling first, especially where you determine that she leaves nearby, it is important to complete an Intake Form with her. This way, you can determine whether she has needs that can be met by your parish. If it appears you are not the closest parish, refer her to the Gabriel Line for assistance. This way, she does not have to travel more than necessary to receive assistance.

2. **What if a mom contacts the Gabriel Project very early in her pregnancy?**

   We recommend that baby items not be provided to a mother until later in her pregnancy (around 7 months), because a parish may receive another mother who is farther along in her pregnancy and needs the items sooner.

   Nonetheless, there are many other services that we can provide to a mom early in her pregnancy. For example, she may need referrals for housing, legal services, food and clothing and/or immigration assistance. The Gabriel Project is also able to provide emotional and spiritual support during this time and many mothers develop positive relationships with their Angels from this type of support.

3. **What if the mother contacting us wants to have an abortion?**

   On rare occasions, you may be contacted by a mother who is considering abortion or even has an abortion scheduled. Sometimes, the Gabriel Project will be contacted in error because the mother thought we provided this type of coverage.

   In such situations, it is important to remain calm and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your conversation with this mother. **Above all, it is important to listen to her.** Often, she is considering abortion because she feels she has no other options and is very anxious. Ask her about the life circumstances she feels make it impossible for her carry her child to term. Try to offer her options about how she might overcome those circumstances and information about help available. Generally, it is best to focus on her and her concerns about the obstacles she faces rather than on the baby in these discussions. Ask open-ended questions (rather than questions requiring a “yes/no” answer) about how she is feeling.
Many women in this situation feel tremendous pressure to deal with the situation quickly and “get it over with.” It is important that a mother take time to consider this decision carefully. If she has not seen a doctor or obtained an ultrasound, suggest that she do so to obtain more information about her pregnancy and what she can expect. Always feel free to contact the Office of Pro-Life Activities with any questions about this topic. Immediate referrals for ultrasound and crisis pregnancy counseling are available.

4. **What if mom is being pressured to abort?**

Sometimes, you may be contacted by a woman whose family or significant other is pressuring her to abort her child. This is more common where a mother is still a minor. It is illegal for anyone to “force” or “require” anyone to have an abortion against their will. However, women often feel coerced to abort and many family members may mistakenly believe abortion is the best option for the mother.

There are various ways to handle this situation. Depending on circumstances, it may be appropriate to work with the mother and her family to come to a reconciliation of this situation. Your Pastor or other clergy at the parish can be helpful in this regard. Because of the sensitive nature of this situation and the large number of situations that may arise, please contact the Office of Pro-Life Activities with any questions or concerns.

5. **What if a mom doesn't want to pray or have a relationship with her Angel?**

This is a frequent concern of Gabriel Angels and Coordinators. We do develop positive relationships with many of the women we work with. In many cases, mothers remain in contact with the Gabriel Project for years after the birth of their children. However, many other women are not seeking the type of mentorship and spiritual care the Gabriel Project can provide.

Some of our mothers may have experienced significant trauma and have difficulty trusting that the Gabriel volunteers are sincere in wanting to help her. That is okay. You are still able to offer your friendship to her, even if she is not ready to accept it fully. Provide the help your mom is willing to accept and continue to keep her and her family in prayer.

6. **How do I handle questions about adoption?**

While it rarely occurs, a mother you work with may be interested in exploring an adoption plan for her child. **Catholic Charities** no longer offers Adoption Placement Services. However, Catholic Charities can assist with referrals to appropriate adoption agencies upon request. Contact Lilian Salinas at Catholic Charities Post-Adoption Services, 713.874.6575 for more information.

Adoption is a legal proceeding that is best handled through the agency. Gabriel volunteers should avoid advising mom about what will happen should she choose adoption. If mom is interested in adoption, it is best to suggest she ask those questions of a qualified adoption agency.
7. What if a mom has already had her baby when she contacts the Gabriel Project?

    Sometimes women do not realize the extent of assistance they will need with an infant until after the birth of their child. While the Gabriel Project is intended for pregnant women, it is not unusual to receive a request for assistance from a woman with a newborn.

    It is up to the individual parish to handle this situation. While the first priority should be our pregnant mothers, it is acceptable to assist new mothers in need to the extent the parish has time and resources to assist these women.

8. What should the Gabriel Project do when a mother needs assistance following her child’s birth?

    Women who have developed a relationship with a parish during their pregnancy may continue to approach the Gabriel Project after their child’s birth for needed baby items. It is acceptable to continue assisting for some limited period after the birth until mom gets back on her feet (the exact time periods will need to be determined by each parish on a case-by-case basis based on parish needs and the needs of the individual mother).

    Because the Gabriel Project is intended for pregnant mothers, if a mom continues to need assistance after the birth, it is acceptable to refer her to another program designed to help mothers with infants, including your Parish Social Ministry, Catholic Charities’ Blessed Beginnings program or other programs listed in this manual.

9. How should we handle suspicions of child abuse or neglect?

    In most cases, you should do everything possible to maintain the confidentiality of the mother you are working with. An exception to this policy will occur if you suspect a mother or someone in the child’s life (either the baby or another of her children) is abusing or otherwise neglecting the child.

    In the case of such concerns, we recommend that you immediately contact the Harris County Department of Child Protective Services to make a report at 1-800-252-5400, www.txabusehotline.org, or your local police department. Ideally, the Coordinator and the Angel can make this contact together. Please advise the Office of Pro-Life Activities when such reports are made. If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, contact law enforcement.
GABRIEL TELEPHONE INTAKE FORM

MUST BE COMPLETED FOR EACH CALLER

GABRIEL PROJECT
Phone intake sheet for volunteers

Date_________________ Volunteer Name_______________________________


Mother’s Name_____________________________  Mother’s Age _________

Phone_________________ Caller’s Name (if not Mother) __________________________

Alt. Phone_________________ Email ________________________________

Address_________________________________________________________ZIP _______

Religion__________________________________________

Church/Parish________________________________________

SS# or ID # __________________________

Have you called GP before?  Yes  No

How did you hear about GP?________________________________________

How far along are you? _________________

Are you:  married  single  living with someone

Is the baby’s father aware of your pregnancy?  Yes  No

Is he supportive?  Yes  No

Is your family aware of your pregnancy?  Yes  No

Are they supportive?  Yes  No

Do you have other children?  Yes  No

If yes, are they living with you?  Yes  No

If yes, how many children?  No: ______  What are their ages?: _______________

Have you seen a doctor?  Yes  No

Insurance:  Medicaid  Medicare  Private  None

Are you considering abortion?  Yes  No
If yes, have you been to a clinic? Yes  No  If so which one?

______________________________

If considering abortion, have you had an ultrasound?

_____________________________________

What is the best time to reach you?______________  May we leave a message?  Yes  No

NEEDS (circle all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car seat</th>
<th>Carrier</th>
<th>Diapers</th>
<th>Stroller</th>
<th>Crib</th>
<th>Formula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>baby clothes</td>
<td>maternity clothes</td>
<td>baby toiletries</td>
<td>housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other:____________________________________________________________________

Comments:____________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Referred caller to__________________________________________________________

Name  Phone  Parish

_____Contacted  _____left message to call us  _____ no answer  _____ call returned and info given

Follow up to
caller________________________________________________________

Date  Volunteer Initials

Comments

Please call Cathy McConn Gabriel Project Coordinator 713-598-1675 or Julie Fritsch, Director of Pro-Life Activities Office 713-741-8728 with any questions
Hello, I am a telephone volunteer for the Gabriel Project. My name is ............... I am here to take your initial information to help you get the help you need at one of our parishes

Who are we?
The Gabriel Project is a program of the Catholic Church which provides emotional, spiritual and physical help to women who find themselves in a difficult pregnancy

Do you know how we work?
- This help is for all women, whatever their religion.
- We give support throughout the pregnancy at the local parish
- We take your information over the phone to send to the parish,
- All your information is completely confidential
- We identify the parish you will attend, based on your address and zip code
- This is not an emergency service.

We Provide
- A particular person at the parish to provide support throughout your pregnancy
- baby items
- referral for medical care
- help obtaining benefits
- Fertility awareness and Natural family planning
- Post abortion reconciliation
- Special care for minor children (under 18 yrs)

What we do not provide...only if asked
- Money for rent or utilities
- Housing
- Transportation
APPENDIX C

Gabriel Project Forwarding and Call Retrieval Telephone Instructions

Gabriel Project Central Telephone No. 713-225-5826

Remote Call Forwarding

Dial 713-xxx-xxxx
Listen for instructions and enter xxx-xxx-xxxx, the PIN xxxx

To connect your phone

72# + your phone number
Voice will confirm your number.
Voice will ask you to Press 1, then 2 beeps will confirm.

To disconnect your phone

Do steps 1 & 2
73# 2 beeps will confirm you are disconnected.

To Retrieve Calls from the Gabriel Project Mailbox

Dial 713-xxx-xxxx

When message starts interrupt it by pressing #
It will ask for your mailbox number: enter xxxx
It will ask for your password enter xxxx

Message Menu follow
Press 1 to listen to unread/new messages
Press 2 to listen to read messages in the inbox
After making your selection from the above choice.
Press 1 to save messages. All Spanish messages must be saved
Press 2 to move message to the delete folder. Always delete busy signals.
Press 3 to review message

Please retrieve all messages from mailbox before going on line.
Return all Calls. Continue to attempt to reach Mom if she does not answer

PDF version
Gabriel Project Resources

**Brochure** an informational tool designed to outline the major aspects of the Gabriel Project. Available from Marcella Colbert 713-741-8728. Available in English and Spanish.

**Gabriel Project Signs of Life** to display in front of the parish are available from Mercury Signs & Display Inc., 6424 Deihl, Houston, TX. 77092, 713-462-1068, FAX 713-462-1934, website: [www.mercurysigns.com](http://www.mercurysigns.com). The Parish orders and pays for the signs. The sign should be in both English and Spanish.

**Gabriel Project Resource Manual** provides essential material to help the Gabriel and Respect Life Coordinators in doing their apostolate. This resource is available to Gabriel Project Coordinators at the Archdiocesan website.

Pro-life prayers and reflections for mothers and babies

Deacon Roy Barkley’s  
*The Gabriel Prayer Book: Prayers for Mothers of Unborn Babies*  
(53 + viii pp., paper)

For all mothers of unborn babies  
for problem pregnancy centers  
for pro-life resource centers  
for maternity homes, clinics, and hospitals  
for all caregivers of pregnant girls and women  
for Gabriel Project Angels———

A book for pregnant mothers, featuring thoughtful,  
Scripture-based reflections and prayers  
in simple, accessible language,  
on many subjects  
related to childbearing and motherhood———

for the baby’s and mother’s health  
for the stages of pregnancy  
for being a good mother  
for caregivers and the baby’s siblings  
for babies with special needs  
and for many other intentions

*SEM Publishing  
P.O. Box 2115  
Pflugerville, Texas 78691-2115*
APPENDIX E – HISTORY OF THE GABRIEL PROJECT

Following the *Roe v. Wade* decision of the Supreme Court, legalizing abortion in all 50 States, the late Rev. Msgr. John Perusina of St. Michael Catholic Church put a sign outside the rectory pledging to help pregnant women in crisis desiring to choose life.

This was the beginning of the Gabriel Project. In 1990, Cathy McConn from St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Houston and Rex Moses from the Diocese of Corpus Christi sought to expand Msgr. Perusina’s vision and helped develop the Gabriel Project throughout the Galveston-Houston and Corpus Christi dioceses.

The Gabriel Project has spread to numerous dioceses throughout the U.S. and Canada. May God continue to bless the Gabriel apostolate.
HOSTING A PARISH BABY SHOWER

Many parishes now hold a shower each year. Let your parish contribute in this way. This is always a joyful event, positive and uplifting. It is one of the best ways to bring the respect for life message to the parish in a constructive and positive way.

- Consult your pastor.
- Display bulletin announcements and a flier in the two weeks coming up to Mother’s Day, or day of the shower.
- Include each group in the parish in the preparations, the school, the CCE classes the Ladies Guild, etc., and give each group specific tasks to do and times to attend at the tables.
- If you have a parish school, involve the children in your parish baby shower. They can make posters to advertise the shower and contribute small items.
- Contact the school religious education teacher.
- Coordinate the shower with a week of Pro-Life educational activities at school.
- Request gently used as well as new items.
- Decorate the tables with pink and blue, balloons and bunting.
- Serve cake and punch after each Mass.
- Leave a crib in a prominent place for donations.
- Remember, everyone can become involved; baby food costs $.50 a jar, so all can bring something.
- Provide a bowl or basket for cash donations.