

40 Days for Life Basics

What is 40 Days for Life?

40 Days for Life is a focused pro-life campaign with a vision to access God's power through prayer, fasting, and peaceful vigil to end abortion.

Prayer – for an end to abortion, for God's guidance for those involved in prayer vigils and pro-life action around the country, etc.

Fasting - please consider fasting. It simply involves renouncing an activity that can put a barrier between you and God. It could be television, the internet, chocolate, coffee, etc. You really can do without it! Take the time you usually spend in those activities and give it back to God.

Peaceful vigil – we stand witness and maintain a peaceful and educational presence outside the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. Your presence sends a powerful message to the community about the tragic reality of abortion. It also serves as a call to repentance for those who work at the abortion center and those who patronize the facility.

The mission of the campaign is to bring together the body of Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused 40 day campaign seeking God's favor to turn hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion.

When does the next campaign start?

Spring Campaigns are held from Ash Wednesday through Palm Sunday. Fall campaigns are held from the last Wednesday in September until the first Sunday in November.

Where will the vigil be held?

The vigil will be held at a local abortion clinic. Visit our website: gctrl.org/40-days-for-life for the current location.

Where do we park?

The best parking is on the public streets near the clinics. Do not park on private property, even at the pregnancy center locations. Watch for restrictions during rush hour.

What are the hours of the vigil?

7am-7pm!

Is this a protest?

No. We bring the source of all peace, the source of all comfort, Jesus Christ, to the sidewalks. We get out of His way so that He can work miracles and miracles are not a protest. 40 Days for Life is a peaceful prayer vigil.

Who can participate?

Anyone! This is a cross-denominational effort, a call to bring the body of Christ together. Typically churches or organization will participate as a whole. On top of participating as a whole church, groups within the church may choose to adopt their own day. Youth groups, Bible studies, choir groups, young adults, Knights of Columbus groups etc. You may be just getting started and not have a group so you may participate as an individual. Or you may choose to form your own group that adopts a full or partial day.

Can I bring my children?

Absolutely! There have been many youth and smaller children out to pray with us. Some people like to come as a family and bring a wagon, snacks and coloring books for the smaller ones. Just be sure to keep them on the sidewalk and not in the yard that belongs to the clinic, and keep them away from the street.

How often can I come out to the clinic?

As often as you want! Typically a church or organization will "adopt-a-day" (or days) and take sign-ups to cover the hours from 7am – 7pm. This is very flexible – come on your church's day and then know that for the entire 40 days there will be people out there and you are welcome to just show up. There will always be gaps that need filled and some days that don't get adopted at all - so we can use all the volunteers we can get.

What do we do while we are there?

Pray! By doing this we cover many needs. All of which have a tremendous impact! Even just being physically present makes a huge impact - so imagine the possibilities when you add the prayers to God! You may pray out loud or silently, you may pray as a group or individually, you may stand or kneel. Any type of prayer will work - most people use formal and informal prayers together while they are at the clinic. You may face the traffic or the clinic while praying and others like to walk up and down the sidewalk as they pray.

Sing! There are some who like to sing quietly to themselves or in groups.

Read Scripture! As with the others read it aloud or silently.

We strive to maintain a prayerful atmosphere while at the clinic. Kindly move a ways down the sidewalk to hold personal conversations in order to allow others a peaceful prayer space.

(Please see the statement of peace for more on appropriate conduct at the clinic)

Where do we stand?

It's important that you only stand on the sidewalk in front of the clinic and not in their grass or their parking lot. Please do not block the driveways – even if you “plan” to move when someone drives up. The street and sidewalk are public areas. We certainly do not encourage you to stand in the street but if you need to walk on it for some reason, it's not illegal.

How long do we stay?

We ask that each prayer volunteer commit to at least one hour. You are welcome to stay as long as you want and chances are you will be helping to fill gaps if you do. Some prayer volunteers travel a long distance so choose to stay for a few hours.

There are also days you may want to come but don't have an hour, come anyway!

What about signs?

We encourage you to bring signs if you wish. The signs should bear positive messages and images. The national 40 Days for Life campaign requests that we not hold abortion victim images for this event. We have a limited number of signs in our office, and you may make your own or purchase pre-made signs. A good place to find pro-life signs is Heritage House. We also have some pre-printed signs in the office, but they often run out over the course of the campaign.

What about the weather?

Rain, snow, sleet or hail we'll be there! If there is a lightning storm or other weather conditions that are dangerous, please pray from home or inside your car.

Will there be any opposition while I am out there?

The same first amendment that gives us the right to pray on the public areas like the sidewalks gives others the right too. There will be passers-by, some of which are supportive and others which may not be. The clinics will sometimes employ or have volunteers serving as security or escorts. Generally, those individuals will focus on their primary job – which is to get women from their cars to their abortion appointments. Occasionally, a few of them may try to harass pro-life volunteers. Treat them with respect anyway. If any are doing something that is incredibly disruptive, consider documenting the action with your phone camera or a second person. Report that back to GCRTL.

Will I have any interaction with the women going into the clinic?

Mostly likely you will not. At Planned Parenthood, the public areas are the treelawn (the easement area between the street and the sidewalk), the sidewalk, and the grassy easement area where the sidewalk would be (on the side street). The grassy area between the sidewalk and the fence are private property, and an 8 foot wrought iron fence with shrubbery makes conversation difficult. Be sure you are not blocking the alley, any driveways, or the sidewalks for passers-by. It is not ok to stand in a way that blocks these, even if it is only for a few minutes. Plus, the focus of 40 Days is prayer and fasting. If you are interested in becoming a sidewalk counselor and learning more techniques for effective action, please visit our sidewalk counseling page.

Will I have any interaction with the employees going into the clinic?

Possibly. Because our prayer and sidewalk counseling has been incredibly effective, the clinic has started utilizing volunteer clinic escorts. We recommend that if you are there at a time that they are there, you continue to focus on prayer. For those who would like to be a little more comfortable speaking to abortion-minded women, clinic staff, or clinic volunteers we recommend taking our sidewalk counseling class (www.gcrtl.org/sidewalk-counseling) or our 1-hour bootcamp training (posted on our events and SWC Page).

What if a patient does come to me for help or to talk?

We encourage that you direct the patient to a nearby Pregnancy Help Center. Pregnancy Help Centers are non-profit organizations that provide help and information to pregnant women, women with young children, and fathers. Locally, they are not medical clinics that provide a broad range of obstetrical care, but they can make referrals. They can provide free and confidential pregnancy tests, limited STD testing and treatment referrals, and they can perform ultrasounds. There is also a Women's Care Center immediately to the East of Planned Parenthood (3273 E Main). There is also the Women's Clinic of Columbus across the street (3242 E Main Street). You can also refer them to PDHC's 24-hour hotline (614-444-4411). If you would like information on talking to women at the clinic, consider our SWC training class. Please contact us for more in depth information.

What about the laws?

The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that peaceful communication—such as spoken words, display of signs and leafletting—are all protected forms of free speech, especially in public places like sidewalks and parks. The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that speech cannot be censored simply because the speaker's message irritates or offends a listener. This was reaffirmed in the recent “bubble law” case.

Who sponsors 40 Days for Life locally?

Greater Columbus Right to Life (GCRTL) – www.gcrtl.org sponsors Columbus' 40 Days for Life.

I have never prayed outside an abortion clinic and I'm nervous. What should I do?

Go with a group or with someone that has been before. You may contact us and we will provide you with a day and time that a group is scheduled to be out so you may join them. Once you have been out the first time your hesitations will go away.