

Real Alternatives: a national model for compassion care and help

By Maria V. Gallagher, Legislative Director, Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation

Missy was homeless, pregnant, and without hope when she stepped through the door to her new destiny.

She had arrived at a pregnancy resource center in Reading, Pennsylvania, feeling desperate and alone.

But soon, she would have the support of a kind counselor who would encourage the strength and resolve she needed to care for her beloved preborn child.

This is just one of the many success stories of Pennsylvania's Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services Program, which is administered by Real Alternatives, Inc. Since its inception more than two decades ago, the program has served more than 300,000 women and their families with free, confidential services.

As the Speaker of the PA House of Representatives, Mike Turzai (R—Allegheny County) recently stated, the program "is a sought-after model for 14 other states in our nation."

Following his keynote address at a recent luncheon of Real Alternatives service providers, Rep. Turzai presented a House citation "to offer tribute to Real Alternative service providers and counselors."

The innovative Pennsylvania program's amazing history began in the early '90s, when then Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey Sr. placed funding in the state budget for alternatives to abortion.

By the late '90s, Real Alternatives had received the grant to run the impressive program.

Organizers established a statewide toll-free hotline (1-888-LIFE-AID) and, as a result, the program experienced tremendous growth.

In 2006, the Pennsylvania enterprise became a national program, when the Texas Pregnancy Care Network partnered with Real Alternatives to replicate the highly successful Keystone

State program in the Lone Star state.

In the second decade of the new millennium, the Pennsylvania program reached another significant milestone: more than one million client visits to the program's centers. And in 2013, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder directed the state's Department of Community Health to hire Real Alternatives to operate a pilot program patterned after Pennsylvania's award-winning program.

Meanwhile, in 2014, then Indiana Governor Mike Pence instructed his State Department of Health to work with Real Alternatives to launch a pilot parenting and pregnancy services program in the Hoosier state. By 2015, both the Michigan and Indiana Programs had expanded statewide.

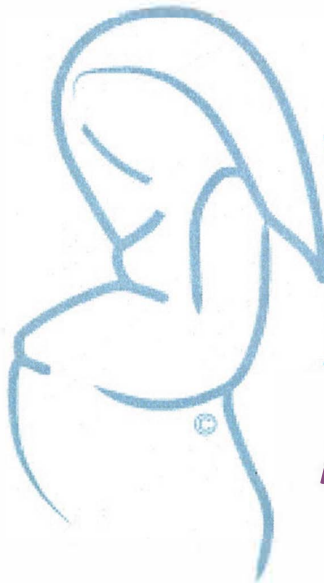
"Hopefully, one day, there will be programs like Real Alternatives helping women and their children in all fifty states,"

said PA Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati. "There are many important lines in the state budget. But there are not many lines that you can point to and say that every dollar we put into the program is saving lives. Real Alternatives and the work you do is important and we are saving lives," Scarnati added.

"What a blessing (Real Alternatives is) to those whose lives you literally save—whose families who help build and nurture when there is so much pressure to do otherwise," said Kathryn Jean Lopez of National Review Online in an address in 2016.

Pennsylvania's abortion totals are now at historic lows—a feat attributed largely to Real Alternatives centers and the many other pregnancy resource centers in the Commonwealth.

As the late Governor Casey so eloquently stated, "Our business is to fight the poison of hopelessness with love."



Real AlternativesSM

Empowering Women for LifeSM

FREE PREGNANCY SUPPORT SERVICES