

The Gabriel Project Of California

Volunteer Handbook

**Updated June/2014
(Includes the 2014 Supplemental Material)**

Gabriel Project Volunteer Handbook

Dear Gabriel Volunteers,

Welcome to a very special ministry and thank you for answering the call. You are about to embark on what will be a most beautiful, inspiring, and occasionally challenging experience.

In your role as a Gabriel Volunteer you will be offering emotional and spiritual support, friendship, material resources, and a great deal of love to pregnant mothers in need of support. This work may seem overwhelming -- and it would be -- if we were doing it alone. Remember, this is God's work and we have been chosen to carry it out through His grace. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and trust Him to lead and support you. This project is a walk in faith for us as we bring hope and love to those who need it most.

This Volunteer Handbook is intended to help you better understand your role and address many of the concerns Gabriel clients may have.

Most importantly, pray for guidance to discern God's will and to have the perseverance to faithfully carry out His plan for you, and His plan for the moms and families you are helping.

THE GABRIEL PROJECT
Of California

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Prayer for Mother and Child

***Heavenly Father,
Who has given us the great gift of life, bless and guide all pregnant mothers that they might respect and cherish the gift of life growing within them. Help each mother to accept her child as an irreplaceable gift from you. Grant that all her needs be met.***

Bless all children yet unborn. Watch over them as they grow and develop in the embrace of their mothers' wombs. Form them and shape them that they might be born healthy. Grant that they might be welcomed at birth with tender love and deep joy.

***We ask this through Christ Our Lord.
Amen***

The Angelus

***The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.***

***Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou
among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour
of our death. Amen.***

***Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to Thy word.***

Hail Mary

***And the Word was made Flesh.
And dwelt among us.***

Hail Mary

***Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made
worthy of the promises of Christ.***

Let us pray:

***Pour forth, we beseech thee O Lord, thy grace into our hearts that we, to
whom the incarnation of Christ thy Son was made known by the message of
an angel, may by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory of his
Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.***

Amen

The Angelus Prayer

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

(A)

Proclaiming the Gospel of Life

The Gospel of Life is at the heart of Jesus' message. Lovingly received day after day by the church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as "good news" to the people of every age and culture.

Saint Pope John Paul II

In March 1995, Pope John Paul II, with input from every bishop worldwide, issued the encyclical, ***The Gospel of Life***. It details the underlying causes of what he terms today's "Culture of Death." and should be required reading for everyone engaged in the work of saving and fostering human life. "The value of life," the Holy Father asserts, "is today undergoing a kind of *eclipse of reason*, and whenever and wherever we Christians may find such injustices against life--from abortion and the arms trade to euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, and drug abuse--we have a grave and clear obligation to oppose the laws that allow such crimes to exist. "

Saint Pope John Paul II said (especially to health care providers)

"Do not lose hope, but continue to promote the sanctity of human life through the service of charity."

When the Angel Gabriel announced the Good News of salvation to Mary, she wondered how all these things could be. But Gabriel reassured her saying, ***"Be not afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God."*** After the angel's visit, scripture says that Mary "went in haste" to minister to her cousin Elizabeth, also with child. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, greeted Mary as ***"blessed among women,"*** and the baby in her womb ***leapt with joy***. While yet fresh in the womb of His mother, Jesus brought peace and gladness.

Our Gabriel moms are bringing new life into the world and they, too, have "found favor with God." The essence of Project Gabriel is inclusion and connection. It helps the mother understand that just as her baby's life is a sacred gift that deserves protection, so is every human life. Just as she and her child are valuable, so are every other mother and child.

God calls each of us, no matter what our setting or vocation, to share His life just as Gabriel shared it with Mary and Mary with Elizabeth. If we truly believe we are instruments of love to human beings made in His image, we must be proudly and unequivocally, for life, regardless of the circumstances.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

(B)

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE IN SCRIPTURE

You fashioned my inmost parts; You covered me in my mother's womb; I will praise You, for I am most fearfully and wonderfully made . . . Your eyes saw my substance, even before I was formed.

Psalm 139: 1-1

Scripture abounds with references to the value of human life in God's eyes, but it does not specifically condemn the act of abortion. So how can we be sure it is wrong? The Israelites knew the Fifth Commandment: "You shall not kill." It was not necessary to condemn abortion, an act that in itself was so horrific. It was not an act of God's Chosen People, but of heathens who did not know Yahweh. No law or judge had to tell them it was a grave sin against both God and man. Instead, Old Testament writers praised God's ordaining and sustaining of the universe, especially human life in all its stages and diversity:

God created man in His own image; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27

Thus says the Lord, your Savior, the One who formed you in the womb before all ages: "I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone."

Isaiah 44:24

And the Lord said, "Who has made man's mouth, his ears? Who has made the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Was it not I, the Lord? Are they not all perfect in My sight?"

Exodus 4:11-12

The New Testament, too, stresses God's kingship over creation. We, as stewards of that creation, must neither misuse or destroy what God has made, nor judge whose lives are more "valuable" or worthy of protection:

Never despise any of these little ones; I tell you, their guardian angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father . . . it is not the will of your Heavenly Father that a single of these little ones should perish."

Matthew 18:10

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

(C)

Does the thing that is made ask the maker: “Why did you make me like this?” Does the potter not have the right over the clay, to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for honorable use, and other for common use? Do not presume then, O man, to question God, for His ways are not your ways.

Romans 9:19-21

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE IN CHURCH TEACHING

The **Gospel of Life** is by no means the first time the Church has addressed what the Holy Father calls these “injustices against life.” From the earliest days, the Church taught what St. Paul preached: The human body is holy, God’s supreme gift; it must not be used for immorality; on the contrary, it must be respected and used for good.

You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within--the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own . . . so glorify God in your body.”

I Corinthians 6:13-15

The generations since World War II have seen the rapid rise of science and technology. Yet popes and theologians have continued to reaffirm clearly the Church’s position on the sanctity of life, both as a guide to the faithful and a witness to truth for the world:

“...whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person... all these things poison and destroy human society and show a supreme dishonor to the Creator.”

from The Church in the Modern World - 1959

“...regardless of the circumstances of its origin, human life is valuable from conception to death because God is the Creator of each human being, and also because mankind has been redeemed by Jesus Christ.”

from The Pastoral Message on Abortion - 1977

“... know that human life and the task of protecting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Therefore, they cannot be measured or understood only in terms of this world, but of the world to come. Human life has not only an earthly destiny, but an eternal destiny.”

from Gaudium et Spes - 1983

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

(D)

From apostolic times, the Church has had an outstanding history of charity. Christians continue to write this history through our parish and community ministries. As disciples, we are called to care for the poor in body and spirit. Third World countries are not the only places we find poverty, abuse, or disease. Too often these are in our own cities, even our neighborhoods. Our charity must be consistent and without bias, for human life is sacred and inviolate at every stage and in every situation.

SIGNS OF CONTRADICTION: IT IS FAITH THAT SPEAKS

I, the Lord, call on heaven and earth to witness . . . I have set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse: Choose life, therefore, that you and your descendants may live.

Deuteronomy 30:19

Sadly, John Paul II's message in ***The Gospel of Life*** rings all too true: Much in today's culture cheapens, exploits, and destroys life. The women we help are, like our own children, products of that culture. As parents, do we not continually struggle with often overwhelming forces in the media and entertainment that promote this "Culture of Death"? What does God say to us? How does the Church help us discern His message? How do we as Gabriel Angels deliver that message to mothers? Do we sit in judgment of their lifestyles? Do we imply that somehow God is "disappointed" in them, that their pregnancies are somehow "punishments" for their having sinned? In short, ***how do we speak the truth in love?***

ABORTION

By the 19th century, the population shift from farms to factories after the Industrial Revolution caused some to see children as economic liabilities, not assets. Around 1920 Margaret Sanger, a social revolutionary and believer in the science of eugenics (selective breeding), began writing social tracts in which she warned of the "dangers" of having large families. Disease, unemployment, women's servitude, and dire poverty would never end, she predicted, unless people started controlling births. She believed further that some races were "unfit" and would cause economic turmoil if their numbers were not controlled. To Sanger, the answer was obvious: Fewer people = fewer problems. Pastors were urged to spread this "social gospel," and one by one, denominations issued formal statements of their reformed beliefs. Many still cautiously referred to contraception as an "evil," allowable only in serious cases, but by now it had become "a lesser of two evils." The greater evil was thought to be the breakup of the marriage, or a life of poverty and hardship brought on by too many children. Contraception gained popularity in the years following World War II, as America became more prosperous. Large families were unpopular, even ridiculed. Margaret Sanger's teachings were embraced in government, business and academic circles. Her legacy is the organization known today as Planned Parenthood.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL (E)

ABORTION

Possibly no issue in modern times has been the subject of more heated debate and controversy, political dissention, religious polarity, and sorrow in among families, as has Abortion. It seems that everyone -- theologians, journalists, scientists, politicians, parents, educators, teens -- has some opinion, pro or con, on the subject. But we know what God says: "I, the Lord, am the maker of all things; before I formed you in the womb I knew you . . . before you were born I consecrated you." As parents, we may face tough questions from our own children or their friends on life issues. And as Gabriel Angels, we may face equally tough questions from the mothers whose babies' lives hang in the balance. Remember, whenever your faith is challenged or you hear an attack against life, always whisper a little prayer to the Holy Family to strengthen and guide you. Then **respond quietly and with confidence**. You will have the words you need. You are obeying the Lord's commandment, not man's suggestions. It is He who speaks through you. The following typical myths regarding abortion are to assist you so that you can offer a true pro-life response.

Comment 1. "No one really knows when life begins."

Response 1: Actually, medical science does know. It agreed long ago that life begins at conception. A male sperm with 23 chromosomes and a female ovum with 23 chromosomes are not a human being, but when they unite into 46 chromosomes, it is a human being. At that precise moment, the fertilized ovum has its own unique code and identity that will last its whole life long. From this point on, it is simply a matter of its growth, not its kind. On the 7th day, it is planted in the uterus, its home until birth. By the 17th day, its heart and blood cells are formed. By the 20th day, the brain stem and nervous system are formed. At 24 days, the heart begins to beat. At 6 weeks, it looks distinctly human; by 45 days, it has its own brain waves, which it keeps for life. By 7 weeks it has all the internal organs it will have as an adult. By 9 weeks it can drink amniotic fluid. By 10 weeks all the organs are fully formed. From here on, it will increase in size. In the womb, it will suck its thumb, hiccup, sleep, cry, feel pain, and even recognize its own mother's voice and heartbeat.

Comment 2: "The mother has the right to control her own body."

Response 2 : This is a true statement. The mother does have the right to control her own body. But, while the baby is in her body, the baby is not her body; it is not even a part of her body. The mother's blood supply nourishes the unborn baby, but the baby itself is unique. Its DNA is entirely different from the mother's; its organs are separate; its blood type may be different, its sex may be different.

In this situation, where do "rights" come in?

Our Message to Moms:

Your life is not the same.

You're pregnant and may be feeling alone, frightened, and overwhelmed by new challenges. Right now you need a friend you can depend on and trust. One who will walk beside you along your new journey.

You are concerned about your life and future and so are we.

We are members of the churches in your city and neighborhood.

We are people who care about you and want to help you.

We offer you immediate, practical assistance with your pregnancy.

More than anything else we will embrace you as family and friend.

By employing our individual talents, collaborating with various ministries in the parish or diocese and utilizing community resources, we stand ready to provide you with the kinds of assistance that you need in caring for yourself and your child.

Beside friendship and emotional support, we can provide pastoral care and counseling as well as the more tangible help you are likely to need. We look forward to meeting with you and, together, assessing your specific needs. The Gabriel Project heartily welcomes you, regardless of your faith background.

What is The Gabriel Project?

The Gabriel Project is an ecumenical movement of churches, under the direction of The Gabriel Project of California, standing together in their commitment to offer assistance to women and families facing crisis pregnancies.

In the Gospel of Luke, the Angel Gabriel told Mary the good news that a child would be born and that she was to be the Mother of our Savior. When she asked, "How can this be?" the angel told her not to be afraid for "nothing is impossible with God." The Gabriel Project announces the same comforting message to frightened pregnant mothers:

"Fear not, for God is with you! Nothing is impossible with God. "

The Role of the Church

The church community announces that they see in the creation of each child a fresh expression of God's unfailing love and their commitment to offer assistance to pregnant mothers in need. They make their message known on a "**Sign of Hope**" placed in front of their church along with an expression of outreach " **PREGNANT? NEED HELP?** " and a tollfree phone number (Helpline).

When a call for help is received, the Helpline volunteer contacts the Coordinator at the nearest participating church to where the caller lives. The coordinator contacts the caller and makes an initial assessment of her situation. A church volunteer ("Angel") is assigned the responsibility for ongoing contact with the mother throughout her pregnancy and somewhat beyond. An initial meeting is arranged with the mother, Angel and an Assistant Angel to further assess her needs. The church community responds with love by providing spiritual, emotional, and material support to help meet those needs. Through prayer and action the church community assures the mother that she has their love and the love of Christ. If a mother has been abandoned by family or her child's father, the church community can lovingly help her overcome her sense of loss and loneliness.

Kinds of Assistance

By employing their individual talents, collaborating with various ministries in the church or diocese and utilizing community resources (available resource lists), parishioners stand ready to provide a mother with the kinds of assistance that she needs in caring for her child. These may include: Friendship and emotional support, pastoral care and counseling, transportation, prenatal care, baby items, education, employment, housing, adoption, financial assistance. The Gabriel Project is a marvelous way to show the community that your church cares about pregnant mothers in need and that there is no reason for any mother within its boundaries to feel that she is helpless and alone.

Major Roles

Upon becoming a Gabriel Project Volunteer, each person makes a commitment to the Moms they serve. They also acknowledge their commitment to pro-life principles :

*** Never promote or encourage abortion, contraception or sterilization**

They understand that while they are engaged in the work of **The Gabriel Project**, even when they are speaking and acting as individuals, they may be presumed to be representing their parish or church in all they say and do.

And they are fully aware that their participation in **The Gabriel Project** is a privilege which can be revoked at any time.

The Pastor

Pastors have no assigned duties in The Gabriel Project. However, at their discretion, they can choose to participate in various ways, such as:

- o Pray for the mothers, babies, families and Angels of the project.
- o Provide counseling and spiritual direction to Moms.
(This may also be offered by other priests or deacons in the parish)
- o Encourage participation in the work of the project
- o Advise Coordinators and Angels in their work with Moms and their families

Project Coordinator (David Zarri)

The Gabriel Project Coordinator oversees the organization of the project.

This includes:

- o Promoting the project throughout California (or the diocese)
- o Assisting churches in becoming participants & Conducting orientation sessions.
- o Providing Helpline volunteers with up-to-date data on participating churches.
- o Maintaining an up-to-date list of all Church Coordinators and Angels.
- o Acknowledging receipt of all client referrals from the Helpline & Determining if the Church Coordinators have contacted the client & an assessment of her needs.
- o Determining if Church Coordinators have contacted the client... and if not, taking the necessary Measures to assure the client is contacted & an assessment of her needs is made.
- o Responding to Church Coordinators' requests for assistance.
- o Preparing & Providing Gabriel Project literature and Internet resources
- o Providing churches with sources for purchasing the outdoor Gabriel sign.
- o Interacting with Church Coordinators to provide and receive information and updates.

Helpline & More

Helpline Volunteer

The process most often begins with a phone call to the Central Helpline phone number.

The Helpline volunteer asks the caller her name, how far along her pregnancy is, if she is receiving prenatal care, her age, where she lives, and her phone number, and how she learned about Gabriel. She is informed that a **volunteer coordinator** will contact her for more information so that she can be assisted according to her needs. Based on her location, the caller is referred to the Coordinator of the church (parish) nearest to where she lives.

CONFIDENTIALITY: *If Mom is not available when a church coordinator attempts to contact her, that coordinator should identify herself as, "Representative of Gabriel Project", and only leave a name and return phone number.*

The Helpline is for client use only. No volunteer or anyone other than a client should call the Helpline. All requests for information about California Gabriel Project should be made directly to the Gabriel Project Coordinator or Church Coordinator.

Church Coordinators

Coordinators are called to be compassionate leaders who coordinate human and material resources. They inspire, motivate and encourage Angels and might become personally involved with some Moms.

Ideally there should be at least one Church Coordinator and one Assistant Coordinator. The Assistant Coordinator will perform the duties of the primary Church Coordinator whenever that person is unavailable (vacation, sick, etc.). It is imperative that there be a backup contact person should the Helpline Volunteer or the Project Coordinator be unable to make contact with the Church Coordinator. *Also, the Parish Office Administrator & Pastor should have a contact list of names & phone numbers for the Gabriel Church Coordinators & active Gabriel team members.*

Working at all times with approval and/or direction from the Pastor, the Church Coordinator oversees the organization of the project within the parish. This includes:

- o Initial setup of the Project. (If Coordinator is in place at the time.)
- o Recruiting Angels.
- o Assigning Angels to Moms.
- o Helping Angels fulfill Mom's needs via the church community and other resources.
- o Overseeing Angels in their ministry.
- o Communication of information to the church community.

Commitments

Church Coordinators are committed to:

- o Responding to each client referral with a sense of urgency.
- o Matching each Mom with an Angel and following up on their interactions.
- o Following protocols to keep the Project Coordinator fully informed.

The Coordinators should fully understand the role, responsibilities and procedures of Angels. They should go on at least one visit to learn the process, but more importantly Coordinators are very valuable communicators at the heart of the project.

Periodically, the Coordinator should provide anecdotal information to the church community by means as directed by the Pastor. People new to the parish or congregation, or those who were previously unable to volunteer may become interested in actively participating. These updates also make the project come alive for the church members.

If there is a special need that cannot be fulfilled by the Angels, an announcement should be made to the church community by means as directed by the Pastor to ask all the members of the congregation for help. By announcing the special needs of the Mom, the entire congregation becomes aware that someone is in need and is being helped by them. Any announcement for special needs should also include a reminder to pray for Mom and her family. Coordinators can also organize prayer chains as needed.

At times, partnering with another local church might be practical or necessary.

IMPORTANT

If a Church Coordinator is going on vacation, is overwhelmed with a family situation or for some reason cannot be available, the Assistant Coordinator must be called upon to fill-in so that there is no disruption of services.

Relationship of Church Coordinator to Project Coordinator

The Church Coordinator should keep the Project Coordinator fully informed about :

- o An up-to-date list of Assistant Coordinator(s) and Angels including contact info.
- o Notification of periods of time when the **Coordinators** will be unavailable to receive referrals and who will be filling in during those periods.
- o History of all client activity, including clients who were referred by means other than the Helpline.

Angels

Angels are called to give the love of Christ to the mothers they help. Each Mom should have her own Angel so she can receive undivided care and attention. Very often it is the personal Christian witness of her Angel that inspires Mom to seek Christ in her own life.

- o Angels befriend and minister to pregnant mothers throughout their pregnancies and somewhat beyond.
- o Angels pray for Mom and encourage her at every stage of her journey.
- o Angels keep the **Coordinators** informed about the well being of Mom and child.
- o Angels, working with the **Coordinators**, ask the local and church communities for specific items or services on behalf of Mom.

Experienced Angels find that the most difficult part of their role occurs when they cannot “fix” every problem for Mom. If we want Mom to learn to trust God, we have to begin by modeling that behavior. We might realize that the Mom and/or Dad have repeatedly made poor choices leading to their situations. This reality is difficult to accept and requires much prayer as well as trust in God.

We must understand the differences between our desires and our goals.

- o Our desire would be that all the Moms we work with will have all they need and should possess (two-parent families, holiness, chastity, mental health, physical health, emotional health, spiritual health, steady job, all bills paid, etc.).
- o Our goal is to serve each Mom we meet with the Love of Christ to the best of our ability. We work towards our goals (that is something we have control over), but we pray about our desires and leave those in God’s hands (we do not have control over those things).

Commitments

Angels are comitted to:

- o Replying to Mom promptly.
- o Checking up on her regularly.
- o Praying for her daily.
- o Arranging for or overseeing services and responses to needs.
- o Keeping all communications and information confidential.
- o Communicating with and keeping the Church Coordinator informed.

If an Angel is going on vacation, is overwhelmed with a family situation or for some reason cannot be available as an Angel, the Church Coordinator must be notified to assure that someone fills in so that there is no disruption of services.

Angels (continued)

Spiritual Support

Mom's pregnancy can be stressful if she is living a lifestyle at odds with God's commandments. Those who support her, in particular her Angel, have the privilege to guide her to seek God's will in her life. If Mom is Catholic, clergy in her parish can administer the sacraments and provide spiritual guidance. Gently invite her to confession. Offer to drive her and introduce her to a priest if she does not know one. Some negative influences in her life may prevent her from returning to full life within the Church, but don't let that stop you. Make the offer. God will do the rest.

If she is not Catholic, clergy of other faiths can be contacted. Having a stable "father figure" in her life can be extremely important to Mom at this time. A pastor might represent both God's protection of her and his love for her child.

Some Moms helped by the project will not know God or will not go to church on a regular basis. Praying and going to church are certainly not conditions of our help. However, we want the best for our sisters in Christ and it is natural and loving to invite them to come to church with us or to ask if we may pray with them. We can and should pray for the Moms we are helping, but we cannot force them to change their lifestyles or go to church. We are challenged to be Christ-like in our patience and unconditional love as we continue to pray for the Moms and for ourselves that we might know and do God's will. Our relationship with Mom gives us the opportunity to show her God's love and mercy.

Assistant Angels

Assistant Angels help on a more limited basis and might help several Moms with a particular need, such as preparing a meal for the family after Mom comes home from the hospital after delivering the baby. If a Mom needs daily transportation for a limited time, it is best to handle this need with several volunteers coordinated by one Angel. For instance, several volunteers can each select a day of the week and each volunteer either takes Mom to or from her destination. Some volunteers enjoy taking a Mom to lunch at a restaurant or they may welcome her to lunch in their home. Some volunteers contribute their talents by knitting blankets and others may babysit or do shopping for Mom.

Whatever they do, all volunteers working to help Moms in need act as the Body of Christ and bring love and hope to Moms through their acts of kindness.

Volunteer Procedures

How client referrals are received and managed

Initial Referral

When a call for help is received, the Helpline volunteer contacts the Church Coordinator at the nearest participating church to where the caller lives. All client referrals are made via email. The Project Coordinator (**David Zarri**) is copied on all emails from the Helpline. The Church Coordinator is expected to contact the client within 24 hours from when the email referral was **sent to**, not **received by**, the Church Coordinator. It is, therefore, essential that Coordinators check their email frequently. (Its not just Monday through Friday)

The Church Coordinator is expected to reply to the email with **"Reply All"** so that both the Helpline volunteer and the Project Coordinator will know that the referral has been received. The Church Coordinator should then contact the client as soon as possible and notify **David Zarri** by email that contact with the client has been made. This includes those situations when the Church Coordinator was only able to leave a telephone message for the client.

It is always necessary to contact Mom.

Regardless of the information contained in the client referral email, the Church Coordinator must contact Mom. It is impossible to know all of Mom's needs or their priority based on the information she provided to the Helpline volunteer. Further assessment of her needs must be made by the Church Coordinator and even that must be considered **"an initial"** assessment.

It is always necessary to visit Mom.

Angels must be assigned to visit Mom at which time they will make a more in-depth assessment of her needs. As the relationship between Mom and Angel develops over time, even more of her initial needs may be revealed or new ones introduced.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important, so when leaving a phone message for Mom, give only your name and phone number unless you know that it's okay to leave more information (refer to the details provided in the client referral email). Mom will know to be expecting your call. See more about confidentiality under **Assessing Mom's Needs**.

Volunteer Procedures (continued)

Failure of Church Coordinator to contact Mom

If for some reason the Church Coordinator doesn't reply to the initial email referral (using "**Reply All**") within 24 hours from when it was sent, **David Zarri** (Project Coordinator) will assume that no attempt to contact the client has been made and will, therefore, personally contact the client. This will avoid causing the client to call the Helpline a second time and will also assure her that Gabriel Project is indeed concerned about her. **David Zarri** will then personally "**Reply All**" to notify the Helpline volunteer and the Church Coordinator that an initial attempt to contact Mom has been made. Whatever measures need to be taken to assure that this client will not be neglected will be determined at that time. Also, whatever measures need to be taken to assure that no future client will be neglected will be determined at that time or soon after.

When Mom is referred to the church by means other than the Helpline

The Gabriel Project welcomes client referrals from other organizations, such as Pregnancy Resource Centers and community services. The preferred way for them to make a referral to us is to have the client call our Helpline on her own. However, if it does happen that a client is referred directly to a church, the Project Coordinator must be informed about the referral and provided with the same client information as that which would have been available had the referral been made by the Helpline. The same protocol applies when a Mom comes directly to the church upon reading the sign outside the church or reading a Gabriel brochure that she picked up inside.

Initial contact between Church Coordinator and Mom

The Coordinator is the first parish representative to contact Mom. Before doing so, information received from the Helpline volunteer should be recorded on the **Client Intake Form**. When speaking to Mom, the Coordinator should record additional details on the Intake Form and make an initial assessment of her needs. Remember the personal touch! Write down additional details in the course of the conversation. Don't make it just quick responses to a series of questions.

Initial visit between Angels and Mom

Having been assigned by the Church Coordinator, Angels will always meet the first time in a public place rather than the Mom's home (See **Angel's Checklist / Step by Step**). Greet the Mom with kindness, and listen carefully to her in order to assess her needs.

An Angel should never go alone for the first meeting. Two Angels usually meet with Mom in a public place to assess her needs using the **Client Intake Form** provided by the Church Coordinator.

Spiritual Preparation

If we hope to bring Mom closer to the Lord, we should prepare ourselves spiritually to be His instruments. Angels must first and foremost be grounded in prayer.

When Mary visited Elizabeth after the Annunciation, she took with her the greatest treasure she had, Jesus in her womb. The baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy! As we visit Mom, we must remember the greatest treasure we have to share with her is Christ Jesus. He calls us to be aware of His presence in our lives and to share the love, joy and peace that presence gives us. Prepare yourself by saying a prayer for Mom and her child before each visit. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the right words to help bring Christ into Mom's heart. Seek to be constantly guided by Him in all you do on her behalf. Be bold in your love for the Lord by assessing Mom's Needs.

The first time you meet your Gabriel mom, may it be as friend to friend. Ask how she feels, how are things at home, how her family is adjusting to the idea of a baby, etc. *You may want to give her a small token of your concern -- Maybe a scripture verse, rosary or medal (even if she is not Catholic).*

If the meeting is in a fairly private place, ask "Would you like to pray with me?" Often this request surprises -- but does not offend. She will be genuinely touched by your kindness, and your willingness to pray for and with her will mean more to her than anything tangible you might give her. She knows, then, from the outset that your interest in her is a child of God. You are there to be the healing hand of Christ and touch her life. Your meeting will be experiences of grace for you both. You might say on Our Father, Hail Mary, or just "talk" to God. *Or hold her hand while you read this little prayer:*

We pray today, Jesus, that (mother's name) may experience your infinite kindness and tenderness towards mothers and children.

May she experience your protection and care for her and her baby.

May her path today and every day be fragrant with our loving kindness.

May she know your great love for her and for her unborn child.

Bless our meeting, Lord. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us and lead (mother's name) and her baby along the best pathway for their lives.

Amen.

Assessing Mom's Needs

The Client Intake Form is very important. It will help assess Mom's needs most objectively. Moms are often in trauma and they appreciate a professional approach to their situation. The Intake Form will also serve as an icebreaker and make Mom feel that we care enough to want to be thorough when listening to her. As the Angels listen to Mom, any information that has not yet been recorded on the Intake Form should be entered.

* *The Church Coordinator is responsible for providing the Client Intake Form to Angels*

- o Prioritize and list her most immediate and basic needs.
- o Ask her specific questions: Is she insured? Have Medicaid? Seen a doctor? Obtained benefits (WIC, etc.)?
- o Discuss with her the help she needs.
- o If it is necessary to refer her to an appropriate agency, be sure to ask her to contact you again and if she doesn't, be sure to contact her. You are her MENTOR.

Remember, the Angel is a mentor and friend. The Gabriel Project is not a referral service. Keep in contact with Mom throughout her pregnancy. Do what you can to be informed about the agency or organization to which you refer Mom. Both you and Mom should know what to expect and not to expect from them. Remember that when you refer Mom for prenatal care, she'll need care throughout her pregnancy, not merely the first two trimesters. The time to plan for her third trimester prenatal care and a hospital at which she will give birth to her child should not be long postponed.

The Mentor To Do List:

- o Set some goals for Mom and yourself to accomplish before the next visit.
- o Allow for a reasonable time to accomplish the tasks.
- o Set a time for the next visit, then call and remind her a day or two in advance. If you do not take the initiative to contact her between visits and encourage her, you may never hear from her again.
- o Let Mom know you are there for her and that she can call you when she needs to talk.

Other Training Tools

Conversation and Listening Skills

At the root of all successful conversation is treating Mom as you would wish to be treated yourself. As caring helpers we must understand that listening is more important than talking.

Conversation can be:

- o The spoken word.
- o Body posture and gesture.
- o Voice tone and inflection.

Of these, the most telling is voice tone and inflection, then body posture and gesture and then the spoken word, yet we often tend to put more importance on the spoken word. In a one on one relationship, we continuously communicate whether we speak or not. The effective Angel must become aware of the impact her tone of voice, inflection, body posture and gestures have on Mom. Angels must know how to evaluate non-verbal conversation from Mom to gain a better understanding of her situation.

Mom needs:

- o To be dealt with as an individual rather than as a type, a category or a case.
- o To express her feelings and thoughts, both negative and positive.
- o To be accepted as a person of worth, with innate dignity regardless of any dependencies, weaknesses, faults or failures.
- o A sympathetic understanding of and response to feelings and thoughts expressed.
- o Not to be condemned for the difficulty in which she finds herself.
- o To make her own choices and decisions concerning her own life. She needs help, not commands.
- o To keep confidential information secret. She does not want to exchange her reputation for the help which she will receive.

A Mom in need wishes, and sometimes desperately needs, a pleasant and helpful welcome.

Mom needs a good listener who will be understanding, empathetic, discreet, nonjudgmental and non-patronizing.

The desire to understand Mom's feelings demonstrates that we are sincerely interested in her, not merely in her feelings about her child.

The first step in interpretive listening is listening for feelings. The Angel listens carefully to the Mom's words, (including voice tone and inflection), and observes body posture and gestures to gather clues that answer the question of how she is feeling. Listening for feelings involves trying to identify what is going on below the surface of the conversation.

Other Training Tools (continued)

Asking Questions

All questions must lead to a better understanding of Mom. Learn to recognize the different types of questions and their purpose.

Close-ended questions are answered with a yes or no. They are very good for obtaining factual information, but not information on feelings, motivation etc. However, teenage Moms especially prefer this type of question because they are easily answered without going into details.

While questions allow Mom to talk about her reasons, including moral reasons, for acting a certain way, they can also imply judgment. If Mom becomes defensive, rephrase the question another way:

What caused you to...?

What made you decide to...?

How did you come to...?

Rapid-fire are several questions in one sentence. They confuse Mom and are a poor communication technique. Never ask more than one question at a time.

Questions containing the answer are used to state opinions rather than to gain information. The Angel should never use a question to manipulate Mom into a preferred response.

Open-ended questions encourage Mom to talk about herself. They are based on something the Mom has said and are used to explore the situation in greater depth. They also provide a model for solving future problems.

Examples:

1. How do you feel about being pregnant?
2. What makes you feel that abortion is the best solution for you?
3. What were the circumstances that led up to his leaving you?

HOW TO ORGANIZE A BABY SHOWER

- Consult your pastor.
- Display bulletin announcements and a flier in the two weeks coming up to the day of the shower.
- Consider an annual Baby Shower, for example, every Mother's Day!
- Include each group in the parish/congregation in the preparations, the school, the RCIA classes, other ministries, etc., and give each group specific tasks to do and times to attend at the tables.
- If you have a parish/church school, involve the children in the baby shower. They can make posters to advertise the shower and contribute small items.
- Contact the school religious education teacher.
- 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/Service.
- Leave a crib or bassinet in a prominent place for donations.
- Provide a bowl or basket for cash donations or gift cards.

Post signs: Clean used items are acceptable

Big Items Needed:

Baby Beds

Walkers

Strollers

Changing Tables/Mats

Playpens

Car Seats

Highchairs

Carriers

List (A)

HOW TO ORGANIZE A BABY SHOWER (continued)

Needed for Layette:

Crib Blankets
Safe Infant Toys
Socks
Bottles
Receiving Blankets
Onesies
Baby Shoes, Booties
Baby Clothes (boy & girl)
Sleepers
Sweaters
Disposable Diapers (small & medium)
Gowns
Hats
Bibs
Baby Shampoo, Powder, Baby Wash
Combs, Brushes
Wipes
Pacifiers