



# The Gabriel Project of California

## Volunteer Handbook

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DIRECTOR:

Mike Ronco 530-990-0567 [dadronco@aol.com](mailto:dadronco@aol.com)



# Gabriel Project Volunteer Handbook

Dear Gabriel Volunteers,

Welcome to a very special pastoral outreach 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, the moms and families you are helping.**

***As you study this Gabriel Volunteer Handbook, keep in mind the goal of this Project:  
To see Jesus and His Blessed Mother in each woman and child He sends our way.***

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## Prayers

### 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

## 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 too 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 a parish-based pastoral outreach, under the direction of The Gabriel Project of California, whose members stand together in their commitment to offer assistance to women and families facing difficult or 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 Parish**

The parish 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? WORRIED? NEED HELP?** - and a toll-free phone number **1-800-910-0191**

When a call for help is received, the Helpline volunteer contacts the Coordinator at the participating parish nearest to where the caller lives. The Coordinator then contacts the caller and makes an initial assessment of her situation. A parish volunteer ("angel") is assigned the responsibility for ongoing contact with the mother throughout her pregnancy and somewhat beyond. An initial meeting is arranged to further assess her needs.

**The parish community responds with love by providing spiritual, emotional, and material support to help meet those needs.**

**Through prayer and action the parish 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 parish volunteers can lovingly help her overcome her sense of loss and loneliness.**

### **Kinds of Assistance**

By employing their individual talents, collaborating with various apostolates in the parish or diocese, and utilizing community resources, 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.

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 – to never promote or encourage for abortion, contraception or sterilization, in serving women and their families.

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 in all they say and do.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### 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:

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

### Gabriel Project Coordinator

The Gabriel Project Coordinator oversees the organization of the Project. This includes:

- Promoting the project throughout California (or the diocese).
- Assisting parishes in becoming participants and conducting orientation sessions.
- Providing Helpline volunteers with up-to-date data on participating parishes.
- Maintaining an up-to-date list of all Parish Coordinators and Angels.
- Acknowledging receipt of all referrals from the Helpline and determining if Parish Coordinators to whom referrals are sent also acknowledge receipt.
- Determining if Parish Coordinators have contacted Mom and if not, taking the necessary measures to assure that Mom is contacted and an assessment of her needs is made.
- Responding to Parish Coordinators' requests for assistance.
- Preparing and making available Gabriel Project literature and Internet resources.
- Providing parish teams with the sources for purchasing the outdoor Gabriel sign.
- Interacting with Parish Coordinators to provide and receive information and updates.

### Helpline

The process most often begins with a phone call to the Central Helpline, which is currently handled by Contact One.

The caller is asked her name, how far along in her pregnancy she is, if she is receiving prenatal care, her age, where she lives, and her phone number, if she can receive text messages and/or voicemail on that number, and how she learned about The Gabriel Project. She is informed that a volunteer coordinator will contact her shortly in order to obtain more information so that she can be assisted according to her needs.

Contact One sends an email to the Gabriel Project Operator (GPO), where it is determined, based on Mom's location, which coordinator and parish is nearest to where Mom lives. The GPO emails this coordinator with the information from the Helpline email. **This email from the GPO will come from:**

**GabrielProjectOperator@gmail.com and the Subject line will read "Gabriel Project Referral for (mom's name) – Please Reply All".**

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



## Parish Coordinator

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

Ideally there should be at least one assistant coordinator to perform the duties of the primary 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 is unable to make contact with the Parish Coordinator.

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

- Initial setup of the Project. (If Coordinator is in place at the time.)
- Recruiting Angels.
- Assigning Angels to Moms.
- Helping Angels fulfill Mom's needs via the parish community and other resources.
- Overseeing Angels in their ministry.
- Communication of information to the parish community.
- Ongoing promotion of the Project within the parish.
- Interacting with and responding to various requests from the Project Coordinator.

### **Coordinators are committed to:**

- Responding to each referral with a sense of urgency.
- Matching each Mom with an angel and following up on their interactions.
- 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 information to the parish community (i.e. - Bulletin article, announcement, ministry fairs) People new to the parish or those who were previously unable to volunteer may become interested in actively participating. These updates also make the Project come alive for the parishioners.

If there is a special need that cannot be fulfilled by the Angels, an announcement should be made to the Parishioners, as directed by the Pastor, to ask all the members of the parish 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 trees as needed.

At times, partnering with another local parish might be practical or necessary. A powerful aspect of The Gabriel Project is that, on occasion, parishes can be linked together when a specific Mom's needs cannot all be met by one congregation.

If a 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 Parish Coordinator to Project Coordinator.

The Parish Coordinator should keep the Project Coordinator fully informed about the organization of the project within the parish. This includes:

- An up-to-date list of all Assistant Coordinators and Angels including contact info.

- Notification of periods of time when the Coordinator will be unavailable to receive referrals and who will be filling in during those periods.
- A history of all parish/client activity, including Moms 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.*

- Angels befriend and minister to pregnant mothers throughout their pregnancies and somewhat beyond.
- Angels pray for Mom and encourage her at every stage of her journey.
- Angels keep the Coordinator informed about the wellbeing of Mom and child.
- Angels, working with the Coordinator, ask the assistant Angels, the parish and the local community resources 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.*

- 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, employment, financial security, etc.)
- 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.

### Angels are committed to:

- Replying to Mom promptly.
- Checking up on her regularly.
- Praying for her daily.
- Arranging for or overseeing services and responses to needs.
- Keeping all communications and information confidential.
- Being available when Mom needs a listening ear.
- Communicating with and keeping the Parish 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 Parish Coordinator must be notified to assure that someone fills in so that there is no disruption of services.

## 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 Mass 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 the 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 help their Mom with shopping. 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 Referrals Are Received and Managed**

**All referrals are made via email.** When a call to the central helpline is received, Contact One emails the referral details to the Gabriel Project Operator (GPO), where the location of the Parish Coordinator closest to the caller is determined. GPO then emails all the details of the referral to the appropriate Parish Coordinator, with copies to the Project Coordinator and Mike Ronco. **This email from the GPO will come from [GabrielProjectOperator@gmail.com](mailto:GabrielProjectOperator@gmail.com) and the Subject line will read "Gabriel Project Referral for (mom's name) – Please Reply All".**

The Parish Coordinator is expected to contact the Mom within a reasonable time frame. If the coordinator does not respond with "Reply All" within a day, another email to the Parish Coordinator will be sent by GPO, copying the Project Coordinator. If necessary, the Project Coordinator will contact the Parish Coordinator to verify that the email was received, and that contact will be made. It might be necessary for the Project Coordinator to refer the call to another Parish Coordinator if the original Coordinator for some reason is unable to respond in a timely fashion. This will avoid causing the Mom to call the Helpline a second time and will also assure her that *The Gabriel Project* is indeed concerned about her. It is, therefore, essential that Coordinators check their email at least twice a day.

When a referral is received, the Coordinator is expected to reply to the email with **"Reply All"** so that all on the referral email will know that the referral has been received. The Coordinator should then contact the Mom as soon as possible and notify the Project Coordinator by email that contact has been made, *even if the Coordinator was only able to leave a telephone message.*

***It is always necessary to contact Mom.*** Regardless of the information contained in the referral email, the 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. Further assessment of her needs must be made by the 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.

## **When Mom is referred to the parish by means other than the Helpline**

The Gabriel Project welcomes 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 Mom call our Helpline on her own. However, if it does happen that a Mom is referred directly to a parish, the Project Coordinator must be informed about the referral and provided with the same 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 parish upon reading the sign outside the church or reading a Gabriel brochure that she picked up inside.

## **Initial contact between Parish Coordinator and Mom**

The Coordinator is the first parish representative to contact Mom. Before doing so, information received from GPO should be recorded on the 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!

***When speaking with Mom, remember: The Gabriel Project is:***

**Pastoral -- the parish responding by meeting a mother's needs that range from spiritual to material;**

**Educational -- the parish proclaiming the value and dignity of all life, especially unborn life, through the witness and actions of its members;**

**Evangelical -- the parish loving and caring for those possibly outside the faith community so that they may be brought to Christ.**

## **Initial visit between Angels and Mom**

Having been assigned by the Parish Coordinator, an Angel will meet together with an Assistant Angel (or other person, **NEVER ALONE**) in a public place (such as a fast food or coffee shop) to greet Mom, listen to her and assess her needs. Meeting in a public place the first time is to help all of you feel at ease and safe. As you sit and talk with Mom, it is helpful if the Assistant Angel or other volunteer fills out information on the Intake form, since the Angel will be focused on Mom and being sure to ask all the necessary questions. Future visits can be wherever Mom is comfortable and may be held in her home, but these should again be in company with another Gabriel volunteer.

## **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 sharing glimpses of Him through your words and actions. Set aside personal concerns and be totally attentive to how Mom is feeling and doing.

When visiting with Mom, **listen**. Let her tell her story, her situation, without input or interruption from you. Be an active, attentive listener. This will tell Mom how much you want to be there for her. The opportunity to give advice, suggestions, and/or comments will come later as you build trust and rapport with her. She will be able to do most of her own problem solving as she talks through her difficulties. Give her the support and encouragement she needs through the information and resources necessary to solve her own problems.

The angel's initial conversation with Mom is as friend-to-friend. The Angel will ask how Mom feels physically, how things are in the family, and how her job or school is going. The Angel might also ask how the father of the baby, her friends and family feel about the baby. The idea is not simply to ask questions in a rapid-fire manner. The idea is to listen with your heart. Mom will recognize a real concern and love on the part of the Angels. If our love of God is shared with joy and hope, Mom will learn to trust God and have confidence in his providence.

The angel might want to give Mom a little token of their new relationship. She might give the Mom a gift of a scripture verse, holy card, rosary or medal - even if the Mom is not Catholic. Angels will also ask if they may pray for and with her. Mom will probably be surprised at the offer, but she will also be genuinely touched by the kindness of the offer. A suggested prayer is "The Lord's Prayer". **Our prayer for her will mean more than anything tangible we might give her and she will begin to understand that our interest in her is as a child of God. Our work is to extend the healing hand of Christ to her and allow it to touch her life. Hopefully, she may experience a brief period of grace during our meeting and we will now share a very special bond.**

It is perfectly acceptable to also give Mom a small personal non-religious gift at the first meeting. The point is to put an emphasis on her personally and let her know she is thought of and cared for. She will appreciate your thoughtfulness and might find it easier to open up to you when you are spending time to help her with her needs.

***Also See: ANGEL CHECKLIST in the Appendix***

## Assessing Mom's Needs

**The Intake Form** when meeting with mom 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.

- Prioritize and list her most immediate and basic needs.
- Ask her specific questions: Is she insured? Have Medicaid? Seen a doctor? Obtained benefits (WIC, etc.)?
- Discuss with her the help she needs.
- If it is necessary to refer her to an appropriate agency, be sure that she understands how and where to do this. Remind her to be Persistent, Patient and Polite when calling other agencies. Remember that you are her MENTOR and should guide her as to how to obtain services for which she is qualified.
- Set some goals for Mom and yourself to accomplish before the next visit.
- Allow for a reasonable time to accomplish the tasks.
- Set a time for the next visit or 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.*
- Let Mom know you are there for her and that she can call you when she needs to talk, but do not be afraid to set boundaries on when you can receive calls (ie. not before 8:00 am or after 9:00 pm).

**The Intake Form is the most important document each angel will use. All Mom's information is included in this document. At the first and all follow up interviews, the angel will record all information on the intake sheet(s). The angel must review Mom's case with the Parish Coordinator. When Mom has delivered her baby, all information must be given to the Parish Coordinator. This information is confidential and can only be used for the precise purpose of helping Mom. A copy of all intake forms must be sent to the Gabriel Project Coordinator.**

## When does it End?

New Angels often ask: "How long should I plan on having a relationship with the Mom I am helping?" The answer is as individual as each relationship. Many of the Moms we help are having their first baby and may want some assistance and encouragement - especially as they begin their new role as mothers.

Angels are actually sometimes with their Moms during labor and delivery. After sharing that experience, it would be unnatural to just leave the relationship. There will be a very special bond between Mom and angel. **Even if circumstances separate Mom and angel by time or distance, many Moms come back to see their Angels and show them the child they helped her bring into the world. If the angel knows the birth dates of Mom and baby, she can send a card to remind them that they are still being thought of and prayed for.**

## MOM INTAKE FORM

ANGEL: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Mom's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have housing? \_\_\_\_ If no where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

Date / How Contacted TGP: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Alt. Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Any other children? \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Ages, gender \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have access to a computer? \_\_\_\_ Internet? \_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a car? \_\_\_\_ If No, what means of transportation do you use? \_\_\_\_\_

How did mom hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_ Angel contacted Mom Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### GENERAL INFO:

What is the best time to contact you? \_\_\_\_\_

How far along are you in your pregnancy? \_\_\_\_\_ Weeks/Months

Have you seen a doctor or been to a medical facility? \_\_\_\_\_

What hospital will you deliver at? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you receiving help from your parents, other family members or the baby's Father or Social Services?

What immediate needs are you concerned about for you and your baby?

### NOTES:

## ANGEL CHECKLIST

Contact Mom several days in advance to remind her of your next visit.

Review the Handbook as a refresher before visits with Mom.

Pray – for yourself and Mom before the visit or contact.

Begin with a prayer each time you meet with Mom.

Inquire about doctor visits. Is she keeping current with her visits?

If there are siblings, inquire as to their wellbeing.

Inquire about her husband/family members.

Make sure Mom is in contact with her insurance provider

Inquire about financial status. Has she been in contact with:

- WIC Benefits — Nutrition Program for Women

- Department of Human Services

- Food Stamp Program

- St. Vincent de Paul Society

Would she like to see a priest for reconciliation/healing?

Make Coordinator aware of any unusual problems or issues (talk of abortion, deep depression, abuse, serious health issues, and housing issues).

Remind Mom that the hospital will not release the baby unless she has a proper car seat.

Brief documentation needs to be made for every visit and conversation on the intake form or an attachment. This should be given to the Coordinator for permanent record after Mom has her baby.