



# **BIRTHLINE**

## **Philosophy, Mission & Core Services**

### ***Birthline Philosophy***

*All human life is sacred. Each and every life, regardless of its social or economic background possesses an inherent worth, a noble dignity, and a spiritual transcendence that must be respected throughout the person's natural life.*

*Since human life begins at the moment of conception, Birthline deeply respects human life in each of its developmental stages. While Birthline values the unborn child, it also is compassionate with regard to the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of the mother and father.*

*Children ought to be the natural result of the love expressed between a husband and a wife. This being true, sexual abstinence outside of marriage is the only moral and responsible way to assure that each child conceived will be welcomed into this world by loving parents. Consequently, Birthline considers the values reflected in marriage and the nuclear family to be in the greatest interest of the parents, the children, and the society in which they live.*

### ***Birthline Mission***

Birthline is a non-profit Christian organization dedicated to serving any person with an unexpected or challenging pregnancy by providing physical, emotional and spiritual assistance as well as programs and referrals reflecting the inherent dignity of all human life.

### **Organizational Information**

Since 1971, Birthline, Inc., a Christian non-profit agency, has been providing services and support to those in and around Central Minnesota who are confronted with an unexpected pregnancy. While Birthline values the unborn child, it also is compassionate with regard to the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of the mother and father. Listed here are some of the many services provided by Birthline's professional staff and volunteers.

## **24 Hour Helpline**

Through a 24-hour telephone helpline, Birthline assists men and women every day concerned about pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control issues, relationship issues and abortion. Our trained staff work one-on-one via the telephone line, offering a willing ear to listen and encouraging callers to come into the Birthline office for free pregnancy testing as a first step to their “problem.” It is at this time that each client is given the message of hope and positive alternatives that Birthline offers.

## **Mentoring Support**

Birthline’s trained volunteers and staff provide mentoring and support to those concerned about the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy. They offer a non-judgmental helping hand to explore all options necessary to make important life decisions. Once a client has arrived for a free personal and confidential appointment, a mentor will meet face-to-face with the client and a pregnancy test will be performed. This unique, one-on-one mentoring offers Birthline a window of opportunity not only for pregnancy support and providing referral services (including assistance in securing help with food, clothing, housing, medical assistance and finances), but also promotes the most effective intervention and prevention of future occurrence through counseling clients on how to live an abstinent lifestyle until marriage. Many resources are made available including assistance in securing help with food, clothing, housing, medical assistance and finances.

## **Prenatal Medical Exams**

Birthline’s volunteer physicians will confirm pregnancies and provide pregnancy verification forms, thereby allowing women the necessary means to apply for Medical Assistance and financial support. This will also begin the process of assignment to a Public Health Nurse. Physicians provide information about the ill effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco as well as the benefits of good health and nutrition during pregnancy. Our goal is to see that all women have access to vital prenatal care early in their pregnancy. Our physicians will also provide free prenatal vitamins insuring these women adequate doses of folic acid early in their pregnancy.

## **STEPPING STONES Incentive Program**

This unique incentive program, begun in partnership with the CentraCare Health Foundation, and currently supported in part by the Minnesota Department of Health through the Positive Alternatives Grant, works with each individual to assess key areas of their life and establish efforts to improve upon them. Areas evaluated are: physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being, education, career, finances, decision making and with that parenting skills or choosing adoption. Our intake staff works one-on-one with individuals and couples to customize this program to meet specific needs. As areas of development are agreed upon, goals and objectives are identified and established. STEPPING STONES Dollars or Decision Dollars are earned for completion of assignments that can be used to shop in the STEPPING STONES Store. The goal of this program is to provide motivation to individuals to develop life skills that enhance decision making, incorporating a thorough and adequate review of the adoption process and enhanced parenting skills, as well as promoting self-sufficiency.

## **Men of Birthline**

Men, trained to mentor and work one-on-one with men who have fathered a child are bringing an essential element to our services. Many young fathers come from fatherless households or lack a relationship with their dads. This program teaches men how to be good dads through the establishment of role models and mentors. It teaches men the importance of being a 'provider and protector' and provides information on Father's Rights and Responsibilities. This program ultimately benefits the fathers of the babies we serve. Yet overall impact expands beyond those men to include babies, women, families and society as a whole.

## **Hearts and Hands Program - Professional Labor Support "The Doula Program"**

This service is offered through a group of volunteers certified by a national organization called Doulas of North America (DONA). Doula is a Greek word referring to a woman who helps other women with pregnancy and birth. A doula is trained to provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the mother before, during and just after childbirth. Doulas offer coping techniques during labor and delivery including verbal encouragement, massage and positioning, relaxation and breathing, etc. Doulas also assist mothers with breastfeeding during the immediate postpartum period and can provide important education and referrals. This important service has been studied and results show shorter labors, less use of oxytocin, fewer Cesarean sections, fewer deliveries using forceps and vacuum extractors, and few requests for pain medication in women who had the support of a doula compared to those who did not. Infants had fewer admissions to the NICU and benefited from increased contact with their mothers and a higher rate of breastfeeding. Women referred to Birthline for this service will receive the support of a doula without cost. Private practice doulas charge between \$500-\$700 for this beneficial service. We are pleased to be able to provide such a valuable service to those we serve.

## **Baby Basics/ Educational Services**

Education is power! Birthline provides an educational component to those we serve, using a valuable resource book, *BABY BASICS: Your Month By Month Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy*. Written to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, the book's unique format was created in response to mothers' varied interests and skills. This comprehensive prenatal guide and literacy training tool takes into account the special health, economic, social, and cultural needs of low-income women. The book is presented to each pregnant client with the offer to attend educational support groups. Our volunteer educators provide support and information to small groups of pregnant women. The sessions cover questions and concerns that parents have during pregnancy and post partum. The goal of the program is get mom comfortable with pregnancy and baby.

In addition to the Baby Basics classes, Birthline also offers a wide range of educational classes to benefit our clients. Free of charge clients can choose to attend a Breastfeeding Support Group, Nutrition Basics, a Quit Smoking Program, Healthy Relationships class, Child Birth Education, Infant Massage, a Knitting class, and Doula Information Night.

## **Central MN Birthparent Network**

Birthparents are often the forgotten piece of the adoption triangle. Plus, there is relatively little or no support or preparation for the grieving, relinquishment or future scenarios which bring the past forward.

The Central Minnesota Birthparent Network is a NEW information and support network in St. Cloud designed for birthparents—individuals or couples who have placed a child in an open or closed adoption to meet. Meetings are facilitated by a “birth parent” for birthparents, at Birthline, Inc. Meetings are free and open to the public.

## **HEART (Health Education and Relationship Training)**

Birthline’s outreach to students in public & private schools, churches and youth groups, offers information and guidance on how to develop and maintain healthy relationships enabling young people to make choices that will help to protect their future goals.

This program has indeed been changing HEARTS! More than 3,600 youth have participated in HEART presentations during this past school year.