

How does counselling about unplanned pregnancy work?

If your pregnancy was unplanned, or your circumstances have changed, it can be a difficult and confusing time. Throughout the counselling process, your counsellor will encourage you to explore your feelings related to the pregnancy, and discuss any issues with you in depth.

You have choices. You can raise your child. You can consider someone else helping you raise your child. A third option is termination.

If you decide to raise your child, the CCS team is knowledgeable about the supports available for you as you do so. These supports include practical and family supports, and cover financial, safety, and specific cultural needs.

If you opt to have someone else raise your child, systems are in place to guide adoption, permanent care and kinship care. Your CCS counsellor can take you through how these work and what supports are available to you.

Termination. Termination comes in several forms, which we can support you to learn about. If you request medical advice or a termination, CCS staff will inform you that we are not medically qualified to provide advice, although as a pregnancy support agency we can provide counselling regarding all your options. Those choosing termination are encouraged to seek further information and advice from their GP.

How do I make an appointment for pregnancy support counselling?

To make an appointment for pregnancy support counselling, call (03) 9361 7000, or 1800 134 863, or visit caroline.org.au online.

If you need urgent assistance, we encourage you to call one of these 24-hour hotlines:

- 13 11 14 Lifeline crisis support
- 13 22 29 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) line



Our Values

Respect for Life

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Social Justice

Empowerment of
Women and Families

Recognition of Diversity

Accountability and
Best Practice



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Pregnancy Support Counselling



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What is pregnancy support counselling?

Pregnancy support counselling assists you with any personal concerns related to a current or past pregnancy, whether it has been full term or part term (including termination and pregnancy loss).

The pregnancy support counselling that Caroline Chisholm Society (CCS) offers is supportive, non-judgemental, confidential and unbiased.

For many families, the value of a single pregnancy support counselling session or a small number of sessions cannot be overstated: whether it be adjusting to parenthood, or coping with a change in circumstances.

When is pregnancy support counselling helpful?

You may find pregnancy support counselling helpful for pregnancy-related issues such as:

- Making decisions and exploring possible options about the pregnancy.
- Coming to terms with unexpected outcomes (for example, stillbirth, miscarriage, genetic conditions, problems at birth, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)).
- Dealing with a variety of feelings related to the pregnancy, birth or early months of being a parent.
- Discussing the pregnancy with others (for example, partner, children, parents, religious or cultural groups).

What happens at a counselling session?

A counselling session usually run for **an hour and may be by phone or in person at the CCS office**. During this time, the counsellor may ask some questions, and encourage you to talk about “what’s on your mind” and any concerns you may have. The counsellor will not give advice but will help you to find fresh ways to think about your situation. It is a chance for you to talk through issues or experiences and for the counsellor to listen with compassion and without judgement.

At a counselling session, you will have the opportunity to **discuss issues in an open and honest way** without the fear of judgement and with the assurance of complete confidentiality. Your experienced CCS counsellor will facilitate your exploration of issues, and

provide a range of strategies for dealing with various situations or problems. If required, your counsellor can seek further assistance on your behalf.

Typical issues that come up in a counselling session will include postnatal support and adjustment to early parenting, financial management, grief, housing or legal issues, parenting, child protection, and information about CCS’s service and other services.

Options counselling. Whether or not they have other people they can talk to, some women will want professional support and information. “Pregnancy options counselling” is usually a short-term service that acknowledges the urgency of the situation. It focuses on a woman’s unplanned pregnancy and supports her to make her decision. It is unbiased and non-judgemental. The counselling helps women to take steps to carry out their decision and explores their coping strategies. It aims to support women through what can be a difficult period. The Caroline Chisholm Society provides non-directive, non-judgemental, independent pregnancy counselling which explores all pregnancy options.

Other issues. Pregnancy support counselling may also help you identify issues for which you will need help from other professionals. For example, it may be that you need to see medical, social services, legal or financial professionals for help with concerns about pregnancy care, living arrangements, leaving/returning to work, child-care arrangements, or finances. Your CCS counsellor will help you develop strategies or identify services to access these supports.

Some women feel able to turn to their friends, family and partners for support, but others feel there is no one around who they can talk to in detail about an unplanned pregnancy. This may be because there is conflict over the decision, family and friends are not close by, or they fear they might be judged by those around them.

Who offers the pregnancy support counselling?

The Caroline Chisholm Society employs a team of **qualified professionals to provide counselling and support for pregnant women**. All our counsellors adhere to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (2005). CCS provides regular supervision of all staff to ensure good practice, and is committed to women being supported with honest, clear information about pregnancy options, and works to ensure that each client has sufficient time and information to make a decision that is fully informed and is most appropriate to her individual circumstances.

The counsellors who provide pregnancy support counselling are trained to support a woman through pregnancy-related issues, and to provide information about the options and services relevant to her pregnancy concerns. The counsellors are specifically trained in **non-directive counselling skills, pregnancy-related counselling issues, and pregnancy-related information resources**.

At the Caroline Chisholm Society, we use a method known as “non-directive counselling” where you control the pace, direction, and cessation of counselling, and your counsellor acts as a facilitator.