



Via US Mail

March 4, 2025
Attorney General James Uthmeir
Office of the Attorney General
PL-01 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

Re: Potentially Deceptive Privacy Practices of Crisis Pregnancy Centers

Dear Attorney General Uthmeier,

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (“EFF”) is a member-supported, non-profit civil liberties organization that has worked to protect free speech and privacy rights in the online world for more than thirty years. With more than 30,000 active donors and dues-paying members nationwide, EFF represents the interests of technology users in courts, legislatures, and broader policy debates regarding law, technology, and civil liberties.

We write to draw your attention to potential violations of the privacy and consumer rights of people in your state who have provided sensitive health data to crisis pregnancy centers (“CPCs”). CPCs are facilities that offer pregnancy tests, counseling, and information, as well as limited medical services in some cases, but not reproductive healthcare such as abortion or contraception. Some are licensed medical clinics; many are not. Nationally, there are an estimated 2,750 of these facilities and the vast majority are affiliated with one or more of three national organizations: Care Net, Heartbeat International, and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates. CPCs reportedly received \$1.4 billion in revenue in 2022, including substantial federal and state funds.¹

As you may be aware, last year researchers at the Campaign for Accountability filed a series of complaints asking Attorneys General in five states—Idaho, Minnesota, Washington, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey—to investigate crisis pregnancy centers in those states that had allegedly misrepresented, through their client intake process and/or via their websites, that information provided to them was protected by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (“HIPAA”).²

An incident in Louisiana also suggests that some CPCs may be sharing client information with other centers in their affiliated networks, without appropriate privacy or anonymity protections.³ In that incident, a software training video shared the names and personal information of roughly a dozen patients.

¹ See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/14/anti-abortion-centers-funding>

² See <https://campaignforaccountability.org/watchdog-asks-state-attorneys-general-to-investigate-crisis-pregnancy-centers-for-deceptive-practices/>

³ See <https://campaignforaccountability.org/watchdog-asks-louisiana-ag-to-investigate-deceptive-pregnancy-center-following-leak-and-hhs-determination/>

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As advocates for consumer privacy, we are concerned that CPCs in your state may be engaged in similar practices. For example, Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Treasure Coast (<https://www.carenetc.com/>) states on its website that “*Client information is held in strict and absolute confidence, according to HIPAA guidelines,*” and its Notice of Privacy Practices suggests oversight by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights, instructing clients who feel their rights were violated to “*file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, calling 1-877-696-6775, or visiting www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/.*” Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Treasure Coast also receives Florida state taxpayer funding via Florida Pregnancy Care Network.⁴ See Exhibit 1.

As yet another example, LifeChoices Family Medical (<https://lifechoicesmedical.com/>) provides on its website a “HIPAA Omnibus Notice of Privacy Practices.” Like the centers discussed above, it instructs clients who feel their rights were violated to “*file a complaint with the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, please go to the website of the Office for Civil Rights (www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/), call 202-619-0257 (toll free 877-696-6775), or mail to: Secretary of the US – Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201.*” See Exhibit 2.

EFF is deeply concerned that people in your state may rely on these representations when they share personal information with these centers and others with similar practices. Accordingly, we respectfully urge your office to investigate whether CPCs in Florida are violating privacy and consumer protection laws by deceiving clients as to how their private information will be retained and used. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



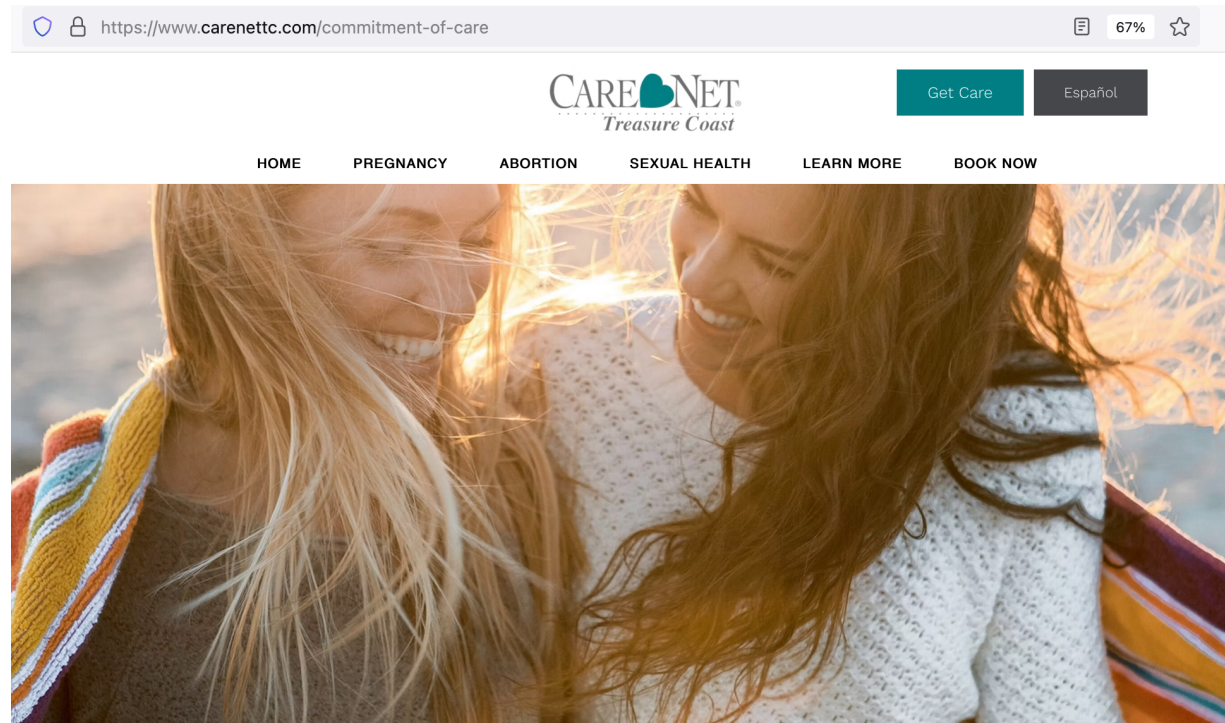
Corynne McSherry
Legal Director
Electronic Frontier Foundation

⁴ <https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/florida-pregnancy-care-network.203707766/grantmaking>

Exhibit 1 – Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Treasure Coast

Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Treasure Coast Commitment of Care

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250122151737/https://www.carenettc.com/commitment-of-care>,
captured on January 22, 2025



The screenshot shows the top portion of the website. At the top, there is a browser address bar with the URL <https://www.carenettc.com/commitment-of-care>. Below the address bar is the CARE NET Treasure Coast logo, which includes a heart icon. To the right of the logo are two buttons: "Get Care" and "Español". Below the logo and buttons is a horizontal navigation menu with the following items: HOME, PREGNANCY, ABORTION, SEXUAL HEALTH, LEARN MORE, and BOOK NOW. Below the navigation menu is a large photograph of two women smiling and looking at each other. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a colorful striped shawl. The woman on the right has long brown hair and is wearing a white knit sweater. The background of the photo is a bright, outdoor setting, possibly a beach or a park, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

Our Commitment to You

OUR COMMITMENT TO CARE

1. Clients are served without regard to age, race, income, nationality, religious affiliation, disability, or other arbitrary circumstances.
2. Client information is held in strict and absolute confidence, according to HIPAA guidelines. Releases and permissions are obtained appropriately. Client information is only disclosed as required by law and when necessary to protect the client or others against imminent harm.
3. Because we do not financially benefit from any decision you make, clients are able to receive the answers they need in a pressure-free environment.
4. Clients are treated with kindness, compassion, and in a caring manner.

Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Treasure Coast Notice of Privacy Practices

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250122151553/https://www.carenettc.com/notice-of-privacy-practices>, archived on January 22, 2025

 <https://www.carenettc.com/notice-of-privacy-practices>



File a complaint if you feel your rights are violated

- You can complain if you feel we have violated your rights by contacting us.
- You can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights by sending a letter to 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201, calling 1-877-696-6775, or visiting www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/.
- We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Exhibit 2 – LifeChoices Family Medical

LifeChoices Family Medical HIPAA Omnibus Notice of Privacy Practices

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250122155758/https://lifechoicesmedical.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LCFM-NoticePrivacyPractice-010121.pdf>, archived on January 22, 2025

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HIPAA Omnibus Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective Date: 01/01/2017 Revised Date: 01/01/21

LifeChoices Family Medical, 18560 North Dale Mabry Hwy., Lutz, FL 33548
www.LifeChoicesMedical.com 813-948-7734

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND/OR DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

This Notice of Privacy Practices is NOT an authorization. It describes how we, our Business Associates, and their subcontractors may use and disclose your Protected Health Information to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations, and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your Protected Health Information. "Protected Health Information" is information that identifies you individually, including demographic information that relates your past, present, or future physical or mental health condition and related health care services.

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CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and will notify you of such changes. We will also make copies available of our new notice if you wish to obtain one. **We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.**

COMPLAINTS

If at any time you believe your privacy rights have been violated and you would like to register a complaint, you may do so with us or with the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

If you wish to file a complaint with us, please submit it in writing to our Privacy/Compliance Officer to the address listed on the first page of this Notice.

If you wish to file a complaint with the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, please go to the website of the Office for Civil Rights (www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/), call 202-619-0257 (toll free 877-696-6775), or mail to:

Secretary of the US – Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Ana Hidalgo Stooks	813-948-7734	info@lifechoicesmedical.com
HIPAA COMPLIANCE OFFICER	PHONE	EMAIL

We are required by law to provide individuals with this notice of our legal responsibilities and privacy practices with respect to Protected Health Information. We are also required to maintain the privacy of, and abide by the terms of the notice currently in effect. If you have any questions in reference to this form, please ask to speak with our HIPAA Compliance Officer in person or by phone at the number listed above.