



We facilitate lifesaving research and apply the findings to
create messaging strategies to share
with others so together, we can
build a future where abortion is unthinkable.

National Office | 1731 Southridge Drive, Suite D
Jefferson City, MO 65109 | 573.634.4316
info@vitae.foundation.org | vitaefoundation.org

Models are used for illustrative purposes only. Visit Vitae's website for charitable
solicitation registration information. © Vitae Foundation 2026
All Rights Reserved

Men's Research Study

Addendum to the Pregnancy Center Guide

Reaching Men for Life

While the pro-abortion lobby believes abortion is primarily a woman's issue, we know from our engagement with pregnancy centers that men play a significant role in pregnancy decisions. The numbers back this up. A 2015 Care Net Lifeway survey¹ of 1,038 women asked who the most influential person was in their abortion/pregnancy decision: 38% said the father of the baby, followed by medical professionals (26%) and their own mother (14%). Statistics like this confirm what we already knew to be true—the father of the baby has a major role to play in the woman's decision to choose or reject abortion. And it makes sense. The driving forces behind abortion involve isolation, shame and a lack of support. How many of those issues could be resolved if the father of the baby was present and motivated to empower her to choose life?

Ready for Responsibility?

As part of Vitae Foundation's 2025 study titled *A Few Good Men: Increasing the Masculine Presence* interviews were conducted with three different groups of men: those who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and strongly leaned one way (to choose life or have an abortion), men who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and said "I'll support you whatever you choose," and men who had no direct experience with an unexpected pregnancy or abortion.

The study identified three prominent responses to an unexpected pregnancy: fear, shock and excitement/happiness. These emotions are primarily tied to how men perceive the impact of the pregnancy on their lives. News of the pregnancy confronts men with a variety of issues, such as their relationship

¹ www.lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Care-Net-Final-Presentation-Report-Revised.pdf

with their girlfriend/wife, their desire to have a baby, their self-identity, and their readiness/ability to have a baby. The pregnancy situation, whether intended or not, becomes a serious moment of reflection on what they want the present and the future to look like. This oftentimes leads to an inner dialogue about what needs to be done. For some, it means getting an abortion. For others, it means preparing for the responsibilities of being a father—“growing up.” Most men, however, acknowledge that pregnancy presents new obligations that require a response.

Perceived readiness significantly affects a man’s desire to choose life. Many men do not feel adequately ready or confident to take on the responsibilities of caring for a child. Reasons men gave for not feeling ready include immaturity, selfishness, age, financial insecurity, life-stage, relationship health, partner readiness, lifestyle convenience and the opportunity costs of having a child. For these reasons, many men decide to advocate or agree to have an abortion. Many men, however, don’t perceive these obstacles as insurmountable and instead believe they present an opportunity to take responsibility.

Relationship health plays a significant role in perceived readiness. Unhealthy relationship dynamics are a large reason why many men either:

- 1) don’t know how to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife
- 2) don’t want to support her
- 3) don’t feel ready for the responsibility of having a baby
- 4) feel unable to have a conversation about the pregnancy/feel like they have no say
- 5) and in some cases, desire to have an abortion.

Many men facing unexpected pregnancies are in low-trust, low-commitment relationships. They don’t see a future with the woman and as a result, don’t want to have a child with her. They see the child as an extension of a commitment they do not want to make. In contrast, men in relationships characterized by high trust and strong commitment are more likely to be excited about the pregnancy and/or willing to overcome the obstacles to start a family with their girlfriend/wife.

While most men acknowledge the humanity of the preborn child, the baby is rarely the deciding factor. Men’s attention is mainly tied to the emotional dynamics evoked by the unexpected pregnancy. Their view of the pregnancy

children and contributes to trauma, hardship and difficulty. Discussions on fatherhood should not gloss over its hardships but frame them in light of how these difficulties are ultimately rewarding, good and purposeful. Communicate messages that allow men facing unexpected pregnancies to see themselves as fathers. Highlight how fatherhood can be a pathway to self-actualization.

Programs for Men Should Be Held in Person – Emphasize Presence.

Men’s programs, whether it be individual mentorship programs or group sessions, should ideally be held in person. Men frequently described how face-to-face interactions felt more genuine than experiences with people online, which makes sense: most men highly valued emotional and physical presence. Being present communicates care, authentic concern, a sense of closeness and stability. If a men’s program hopes to instill these same values in how men approach their relationships with their partners, it should reflect these values in how the program operates.

Male Mentors Should Reflect the Attributes Men Look Up To

Men’s programs/classes should be led by men who reflect the ideal masculine model. Men look up to other men who are present with those they care about (physically and emotionally), who are responsible (toward family, duties), who support others and who have strong character (trustworthy, respected, moral, discerning, skilled). Pregnancy centers or churches who sponsor men’s programs should consider finding men who exhibit these characteristics—men whose integrity will carry weight when talking and giving counsel on topics such as responsibility, readiness, relationship health and faith. Mentors/leaders who have gone through an unexpected pregnancy themselves can also be effective in reaching other men who are facing similar circumstances.

To read the rest of *The Pregnancy Center Guide: Reaching Modern Women Using Vitae Foundation Research*, visit vitaeresearchinstitute.org/research/guidebooks/



good is worth overcoming the emotional/material obstacles that would prevent them from choosing life.

Identify What Makes Him Not Ready

Counseling should aim to understand man's self-perceived readiness to identify gaps that can be addressed. Men need to feel empowered to have and support a child. Ask questions about his specific anxieties and walk him through what it would look like to confidently address these concerns. Identify potential gaps in his knowledge about fatherhood and connect him with accessible support systems. Offer trusted resources, whether they are locally or digitally available.

Identify dynamics/issues that cause misunderstanding, mistrust, ambiguity, and/or discord with his significant other. Counseling should focus on strengthening/repairing the health of the relationship with his significant other. Help the man overcome emotional obstacles that might arise which prevent him from wanting to support her through the pregnancy. Encourage him to view the strength of his relationship as an opportunity to grow and mature into his responsibilities as a man. If the relationship is unsalvageable, help the man respectfully convince his partner to accept his emerging new identity as a father in a way that also addresses her own needs.

Key: The Pregnancy Conversation

Most men feel that abortion is primarily a woman's choice and it is not their "right" to make the final decision. They perceive that the woman is the one carrying the burden of the pregnancy and therefore, *she* has the right to determine what to do with the preborn life. Most men perceive abortion as a decision where they have minimal or no say at all, though many men believe they can and should have some influence on her decision.

Most men feel that in the face of an unexpected pregnancy, both the man and the woman should be involved in the conversation about what to do. They express a desire to support their pregnant girlfriend or wife, but as noted before, many do not connect this desire with a decision in favor of the preborn life.

What happens during the conversation is important. When approached with news about an unexpected pregnancy, many men who desire to support

their partner perceive that "I'll support you whatever you choose" is most supportive thing to say. They believe it respects her autonomy, is non-confrontational, and in some cases, communicates an indirect openness to abortion (even if they recognize that the burden of the decision-making then falls on the woman). Some men disagree with this approach, believing it places an unfair burden on the woman.

They feel that communicating their preference for or against choosing life is either a more honest way of approaching the conversation, a more effective way of convincing the woman toward their preference, and/or a better way of supporting the woman in the decision-making process. Many of these men expressed a belief that they could influence her decision.



Considerations for Pregnancy Centers

Empower the Conversation

We know that the conversation about the pregnancy plays a significant role in whether a woman will carry to term. An honest, clear and authentic conversation between the man and the woman will leave her feeling supported, loved and confident about carrying the pregnancy to term. For the man, it will leave him feeling more confident in his ability to care for her and the expectant preborn life. However, many men do not feel prepared or able to approach this conversation—and since they are often influenced by cultural scripts which tell men things like "her body, her choice" and "no uterus, no opinion," saying something like "I will support you no matter what you choose" seems like a safe option. But previous studies reveal that this response can make the woman feel isolated and alone—it places the weight of the decision on her. Pregnancy centers should consider these emotional dynamics as they educate and counsel men whose girlfriends/wives are facing an unexpected pregnancy. Let men know that they don't have to make the final decision right away—he has time to collect himself, talk and look with her at all their options.

Identify Practical Ways to Support Her

In the face of an unexpected pregnancy, most men communicate a desire to support their partner. Pregnancy centers should help men identify this desire and redirect it towards supporting a decision for life. One of the things pregnancy centers can do to ensure this happens is by asking women to book appointments with their partner. This immediately includes the man and hopefully gets him through the doors with her. At that point, pregnancy centers can invite him to view an ultrasound with her and help him understand more about the pregnancy and the development of his child. Demonstrate and walk-through what authentic support looks like—whether that's in a pregnancy class, a financial literacy course or during a counseling session. Offer resources that empower the man to help her through the pregnancy.

The Impact of Fatherhood

Men perceive fatherhood as a meaningful role. Their experience with father figures influences how they perceive their own roles as fathers. Fathers are seen as men who should be providers/protectors for their children, supportive of their wife/partner, one who offers safety and presence, teaches valuable skills, etc. Men with children express a variety of emotions related to fatherhood including pride, joy, happiness, a sense of purpose and a sense of duty. Men with no father in their life had negative feelings about his lack of presence and viewed absent father figures with anger and disappointment. Men with absent/no father figure at all express a desire to parent their children opposite to the model they were given.



Considerations for Pregnancy Centers

Frame Fatherhood as Meaningful and Fulfilling

Counseling men on fatherhood should emphasize how being a father offers meaning and purpose. Messaging should demonstrate the joy and beauty of fatherhood. It should also highlight how the absence of good fathers affects

fluctuates between perceiving the preborn child as a burden or a blessing. Men who consider the unexpected pregnancy a “mistake” or feel incapable of being a father are more likely to view the baby as a burden. Men who welcome the emerging obligations of fatherhood, on the other hand, see the baby as a blessing. Many fall in-between these two poles. Some who accept fatherhood expressed more concern over the responsibilities of being a father than excitement over the emerging life.

Considerations for Pregnancy Centers

Offer Programs and Counseling That Includes and Understands Men

Pregnancy centers should be aware of the emotional landscape men inhabit in the face of an unexpected pregnancy. Because readiness is often a complex and multi-faceted emotional state, centers should offer counseling and programs that help men feel both understood and supported.

Reframe the Situation

Most men acknowledge that it is their responsibility to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. Attempts to help men fulfill their responsibilities should take into consideration that while most men know they should be responsible, they struggle with what this means (abortion or something else?). Counseling should frame the man's role in the pregnancy as both a responsibility and a privilege. Help men understand that despite the challenges ahead, the preborn child is a blessing. Supporting her is something they should want to do.

Counseling should help men see how having a baby is a pathway to maturity, a more responsible and fulfilled self, a heart full of love for others, a more confident version of the self, being a better boyfriend/husband, being the man who God calls me to be, etc. Men need to see how the process of becoming something

