



# BIRTHLINE PREGNANCY SUPPORT INC

## GOVERNING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICING ETHOS

### Foundations

Birthline Pregnancy Support Inc (Birthline) was founded in September 1972 and registered as an Incorporated Body in 1999.

As a not-for-profit charity, Birthline operates without political, religious or commercial interests.

Birthline recognises the primary importance and value of every human being, from fertilization until natural death, supporting life at every developmental stage, celebrating individualisation and diversity. As such Birthline is considered as “pro-life”.

Birthline provides access for anyone seeking pregnancy related counselling, general information and practical support through a 24/7 national telephone hotline. On-site services requested via appointment include counselling, material assistance, pregnancy tests and community engagement.

All services are cost-free, non-judgemental and confidential.

Anyone requesting services or to serve as a volunteer is treated with openness and dignity.

### Management

Birthline is supported by private donors and volunteers.

The Board of Management executes administrative and governance responsibilities according to the guidelines of the South Australian Incorporations Act.

Board members are appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

The Director is constitutionally a member of the Board and responsible for the day-to-day running of the charity.

Volunteers assist in all aspects of the running of the organisation under the informal delegation of the Director and in accordance with the Board of Management.

Birthline encourages co-operation with other organisations and service personnel, likewise committed to these principles and the strict exclusion of collaboration with agencies that work against these principles.

On-going commitment to providing education and training equips counsellors with current information, expectations of service delivery, work-place practices and policies. All Birthline counsellors actively participate in ongoing training and counselling supervision. Policies and procedures are contained in separate documents which volunteers reference and adhere to.

Whilst Birthline counsellors may have professional qualifications and experience, service delivery is restricted to the Governing documents.

Counsellors and volunteers offering service to Birthline are bound by the principles outlined in this document and cannot depart from them.

### Counselling Principles

Non-directive counselling engages clients through Active Listening, Reflective Responses and Summarising based on the principles of non-directive counselling (adapted from Biestek’s Social Work 7 Principles).

*The seven principles are as follows:*



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### **INDIVIDUALISATION**

Birthline recognises the primary importance and value of every human being, as a unique individual and having the right to be treated as such.

### **ACCEPTANCE, COMPASSION AND RESPECT**

Anyone requesting services or to serve as a volunteer is treated with dignity and acceptance.

The counsellor perceives and responds to the client's genuine presentation of feelings. Acceptance encourages an open and engaging interaction, because it is based on the fundamental value of the client's identity, dignity and self-worth.

### **CLIENT SELF - DETERMINATION**

Birthline ensures neutral and confidential counselling support with client self-directing their own outcomes.

Counsellors recognise the client's right and need to have freedom in making choices and accountability for decisions. The counsellor does not assume responsibility for the client, does not persuade in a controlling way, and does not manipulate the client to make decisions to conform to the counsellor's preferences. Counsellors create transparency by explaining services and use appropriate disclaimers. The counsellor is aware the client's right to self-determination may be limited for various reasons and is mindful to respond appropriately. Counsellors respond to client requests, in so far as they do not refer for abortion. Abortion referral recommends action for a health decision and constitutes giving advice. Counsellors are not permitted to give health advice nor detract from the client's ability to make a self-determined decision.

Counsellor neutrality is demanded in areas of client decisions and actions because the counsellor is aware clients may be considering options that impact their health and wellbeing, and for significant others.

### **NON –JUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDE**

Counsellors provide a safe and non-judgemental space for clients to explore, reflect on and consider their options in order to make a well-informed and empowered choice. Counsellors are aware not to cast judgement due to the impact it may have on the client's sense of dignity, or to cause withdrawal.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is the preservation of private information concerning the client, which is disclosed within the counselling interaction, or is received from other sources in the course of working with a client. (The client's right to confidentiality is not absolute. There are situations in which another right or legal duty is greater than the client's right to confidentiality).

Counsellors will not divulge any information obtained through their interactions or connection to services, insofar as it is necessary to do so in order to perform their duties, and formally declare this before a Justice of The Peace.

### **PURPOSEFUL EXPRESSION OF FEELING**

The recognition of the client's desire to express feelings freely. The counsellor listens purposefully, neither discouraging or condemning the express of those feelings. Counsellors can also expect a reciprocity in respect; that interactions will be purposeful within the context of a free expression of feelings.

### **CONTROLLED EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

The counsellor is sensitive to the client's feelings, listens to what the feelings may mean, and responds in order to demonstrate understanding or clarification. The counsellor's response is not only verbal in a face to face setting; it is also nonverbal. The interaction is "controlled" by the self-discipline of the counsellor. Counsellors have the right to respectfully conclude the interaction if a client's exchanges are deemed inappropriate or beyond the purpose of the service.