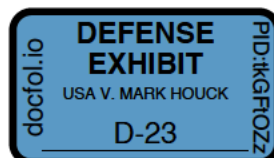


# Patient Escort Training Manual

*UPDATED JULY 2021*

1



## WELCOME!

Thank you for volunteering for Planned Parenthood Southeastern Pennsylvania. As a patient escort, you are fulfilling a very important function. In addition to defending a woman's right to choose, you are also protecting a woman's well-being.

Our role is to guide patients and visitors into the clinic with the **least amount of disturbance possible**, as well as to provide a positive environment for all those that enter.

PPSP believes that people should be able to take advantage of what Planned Parenthood has to offer, free of harassment and fear.

### What we're asking of you as escorts:

- to be calm in the face of a potentially large and/or loud crowd
- to respond to hateful language with **silence**
- to **ignore** protesters and focus on clients
- to work in the heat, cold, rain, or snow
- to receive training and act in accordance with all guidelines and policies
- to complete PPSP's managing suspicious encounters training within 30 days of PE training
- to show up when you have committed to
- to be flexible
- to be firm, but patient

If you have escorted elsewhere, please remember that every organization or medical facility has different philosophies and guidelines regarding escorting.

PPSP activates a patient escort program at a health center if and when the center regularly experiences the presence of opposition. Currently, we have active patient escorting programs and the need for escorts at the following health centers:

- Elizabeth Blackwell at Locust Street: Wednesday and Saturday morning
- Surgical Far Northeast: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday morning
- West Chester Health Center: Friday morning
- Norristown Health Center: Thursday and Saturday morning

### Escort Policies

Escorts ensure that patients and visitors gain access into the clinic with the least amount of trauma as possible. Escorting is not the appropriate environment for expressing your political beliefs. By your presence alone you are making a positive statement, one that demonstrates pride, patience and strength.

It is natural to feel overwhelmed at times in protester situations. Methods of protesters vary. Some harass verbally, some carry signs or pictures and some will accost women with

information and words as they try to enter. Some protesters are easily agitated. Once agitated they pose a threat to women’s mental state as they enter the clinic. It is not always the direct confrontation that agitates a protester. Instances as simple and innocent as discussing a protester with another escort could spark anger or excitement.

It is unacceptable behavior to engage with, or antagonize the protesters. Even engaging in a “small” discussion is discouraged. This non-engagement policy is strictly applied to all PPSP staff and volunteers. Action will be taken with escorts who demonstrate an inability to refrain from “engaging.”

Please note that the spirit and expectation of non-engagement applies to counter-protesters (individuals or groups who are present at the center in support of Planned Parenthood). The presence of counter-protesters has the potential to incite anti’s, increase tensions and ultimately create a more hostile environment for our patients.

In all situations, be aware of your behavior and remember to remain calm. If you feel yourself getting angry or upset, let the coordinator know and go inside. Stay aware of your emotions.

**Do not call anyone by name or give out personal information about yourself, other volunteers or staff members (name, phone number, etc.) in front of a protester, and always respect the confidentiality of patients.**

PPSP will not tolerate dangerous weapons in or around any of our facilities. No staff member, volunteer, or visitor shall carry or otherwise possess any gun, pistol, explosive device, hazardous chemicals, or any other dangerous or illegal weapon on PPSP property regardless of whether or not the person is licensed to carry that weapon, unless they have express written permission from the agency.

As PPSP volunteers, your safety is as important to us as the safety of our patients and staff. In addition to following the policies and guidelines in this manual, and seeking assistance as needed from your escort coordinator and/or security or center staff, we ask that you follow your best instincts, including: if you arrive at a center where opposition is present, to find that you are the only escort present, feel free to go home! **You should not remain in any situation in which you have concerns about your own safety.**

<b>Attire</b>
---------------

Remember to dress appropriately for the weather. Leave your umbrellas at home (umbrellas may get in the way when escorting). Wear a raincoat or rain gear with a hood and be sure to wear what is comfortable for you for different types of weather. When you arrive at the center, remember to put on an escort pinnie.

Keep in mind that protesters will pick up on any religious or political clothing/jewelry that you have on.

Refrain from wearing any buttons, T-Shirts or jewelry that could be considered antagonistic (e.g. "Against abortion? Don't have one!").

### Approaching Patients

It is not always easy to recognize a patient, so it is better to be friendly and assertive in identifying yourself, and ask people who are approaching if they would like an escort. A helpful tip is to say "hello" to everyone. This eventually becomes so second nature that talking with patients becomes easier. It is better to ask if someone wants an escort and be wrong than not to ask and be wrong.

Be aware of your physical presence. Position yourself away from the building in order to make yourself more easily identifiable.

If the patient or visitor is going to Planned Parenthood and has decided that they do not wish to have an escort, simply step aside. This decreases the likelihood of the protesters picking up on their entry.

Patients of Planned Parenthood frequently arrive on foot or by public transportation, so someone traveling in the general direction of the clinic is likely seeking to enter. Surgical patients might be dropped off from a car or approaching on foot and accompanied by a support person.

The safest way to tell if someone is coming to PPSP is to say to him or her:

*"I'm a volunteer with the health center. Are you going to Planned Parenthood today?"*

Then...

*"If it's OK, I'll walk you in"*

Though time is limited, you may also take this time to empower the patient by saying:

*"You don't have to take their literature."*

*"You can tell them to leave you alone. Say it loudly."*

Identifying yourself is extremely important because prospective patients don't always read the lettering on the escort pinnies.

**It is imperative that the escorts do not touch patients.** Not only may this have a negative effect on the patient, it also gives the appearance of coercion.

### Escort Coordinators

An escort coordinator is present for most shifts at our health centers. Their responsibilities include: documenting the day's activities, determining escort placement, ensuring ongoing communication and coordination with the security officer on duty, and working with the police (in coordination with the security officer, or, in the absence of a security officer, directly).

Coordinators rotate their schedules and meet twice a year to discuss escorting, security and protester activity. We encourage you to bring any concerns or questions to the coordinator on duty.

The escort coordinator documents all occurrences that arise during the day. A camera is made available to the coordinator and photographs are discreetly taken of any new or unusual protesters. You are expected to report any suspicious behavior, packages or conversations to the coordinator on duty.

**Press/Media**

If a member of the media approaches you, we ask that you contact the Escort Coordinator or Center Manager and they will then contact the appropriate PPSP staff person.

**Protesters**

The first amendment of the constitution gives everyone the right to “peacefully” protest.

Anti-choice groups are legally allowed to hold demonstrations. Their activities may include:

- Sidewalk counseling (protesters “working” to speak to a patient or “counsel” them)
- Distributing literature
- Praying
- Shouting
- Take pictures

All of these activities are legal only:

- When they do not obstruct access to the building or property.
- When they do not unduly intimidate clients.
- When done on public property.

*Public property* includes all the sidewalks and streets surrounding PPSP’s buildings. Some protesters will lean against the gate or the building, which is technically private property. When you see a protester leaning against the gate or the building, alert the escort coordinator, security officer, or Center Manager. *Do not confront the protester yourself.*

If you bump into a protester, say, “Excuse me” loudly and sincerely. This alerts the coordinator, security officer and police (if present) to any unwanted physical activity.

**Large Protests**

On the third Saturday of the month a prayer vigil composed of 50 to 125 people takes place outside of PPSP’s Elizabeth Blackwell Center at Locust Street, 1144 Locust Street, Philadelphia.

On the first Saturday of the month a prayer vigil drawing upwards of 50 people takes place outside of our Surgical Far Northeast Center.

In addition, Planned Parenthood monitors various sources for advance information about large-scale protests. PPSP Security informs all PPSP staff of expected protest events, and patient escorts are notified and encouraged to sign up for a shift if available.

**There may be photographers and videographers during a protest. If the confidentiality of our patients is in jeopardy, newspapers are available for escorts to shield patients' faces.**

### Security Officers

PPSP Security Officers are experienced security professionals with specific training on protecting the safety and security of Planned Parenthood patients, staff, volunteers and visitors. When you begin escorting or start at a new center, introduce yourself to the PPSP security officer. It is critical that patient escorts recognize and follow the directions of the PPSP security officer under all circumstances.

PPSP's Security Officers are our main contact with law enforcement agencies and officers, backed up by the Center Manager. To ensure a prompt and coordinated response from law enforcement, **generally you should ask the Security Officer or Center Manager to make the call** (rather than doing so yourself); however, if the Security Officer or Center Manager are not present, or **if you or someone else is facing a clear and present danger, then you should immediately call 911.**

Currently, PPSP Security Officers are deployed at the following locations on the specified days:

- Elizabeth Blackwell at Locust Street – Monday through Saturday (all open hours)
- Surgical Far Northeast – Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
- West Chester – Fridays
- Norristown – Thursdays

At Elizabeth Blackwell at Locust Street, plain-clothed police are present from time-to-time when we are protested during business hours. A particular unit of police, Civil Affairs, is designated for local protester activity. In addition to Civil Affairs, there may also be uniformed police officers present at times.

### Managing Suspicious Encounters and Reporting Incidents

If you see a situation which is disruptive or may become so, you should immediately inform the escort coordinator, who will inform the Security Officer or Center Manager; for example, if you see a protestor:

- Block or obstruct a patient's entry into or departure from the center
- Follow a patient and yell at or badger him or her
- Use their body and/or a large sign to force a patient to maneuver around them
- Trespass onto center property
- Shove, touch, or grab a patient, visitor or escort
- Attempt to give a wrapped package to a patient or visitor

- Carrying a weapon of any kind

If an escort coordinator or Security Officer is not immediately available, you should notify the local police directly in the event of a serious incident, including if you are personally assaulted while on duty as an escort, receive violent threats from protestors, or observe the presence of unknown objects or weapons of any kind. Once you have contacted the police, inform the escort coordinator, Security Officer and/or Center Manager immediately.

#### **Contact Information**

Monthly scheduling e-mails are sent to trained escorts. Once you have been trained, it is expected that you will escort at least once a month. Please schedule your shift at least 24 hours in advance so that your name can be added to the list for security.

If you are unable to make your scheduled time to escort, please remove your name from the schedule so someone else can fill your spot.

If you have questions or concerns contact [REDACTED], Coordinator of External Affairs, at [REDACTED] or call [REDACTED].

Thank you for your commitment to protecting reproductive rights.