Parish-based Pregnancy Assistance Program
Office for Family Life
Catholic Diocese of Arlington

The Angel Book ©
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The Gabriel Project National Office

www.thegabrielproject.org

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Gabriel Project Arlington
Office for Family Life
Catholic Diocese of Arlington

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Is Dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mother and Patroness of the Unborn
Star of the New Evangelization
Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God!

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man? And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

And Mary said: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." With that the angel left her.

Thereupon Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out in a loud voice: "Blest are you among women and blest is the fruit of your womb. But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby leapt in my womb for joy. Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled."

Luke 1:11-45
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I. What is the Gabriel Project?

Following the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973 which made abortion legally permissible in all the States, the Rev. Msgr. John Perusina, late pastor of St. Michael Parish on Sage Road, Houston, put a sign outside the rectory which said: If you will have your baby, this parish will help you in every way. The original sign still stands today.

This was the beginning of the Gabriel Project. In 1990, Cathy McConn from St. Cecilia Parish in Houston and her friend, Rex Moses from Corpus Christi, saw the sign, and the Gabriel Project was developed throughout the Galveston-Houston and the Corpus Christi dioceses.

The Gabriel Project is parish based crisis pregnancy intervention within the Catholic Church. Through the parish acting as the Good Samaritan, Mom receives the love, care, and spiritual, material, and emotional support she needs throughout her pregnancy.

The parish community responds to Mom with unconditional love. A “Sign of Life” is placed in front of the church stating that help is available to pregnant women. A trained mentor, the parish Gabriel Angel, is responsible for ongoing contact with Mom, through out her pregnancy and beyond.

The Gabriel Project is the manifestation of God’s love to women experiencing a crisis pregnancy. This love is a witness of the infinite and healing love of God. The Gabriel Project is the work of the Holy Spirit; and through pastoral care evangelizes and educates.

The Gabriel Project works collaboratively with other Apostolates and Ministries in the Parish and within the Diocese. Once Mom has met with her Angel, her crisis is over although her problems are not. It will take some time to help Mom work out her difficulties.

The Gabriel Project is not an emergency service. All emergencies must go directly to the local emergency room or to the police.

The Gabriel Project is grounded in prayer and seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The most important gift we have to offer Mom is the gift of Christ Our Lord. Always pray with her and for her. Let her know how precious she and her unborn baby are to the Lord. Never be afraid to speak the truth in love. Do not condemn or preach to her, but lovingly let her know what wonderful graces the Lord has to offer. Remember if the Angel does not have a strong faith, and close relationship with God, it will be hard to share it with someone else. We cannot share what we do not have.

We remain motivated out of love and mercy for the woman. If we love her as Christ loves her, seeing Christ in her, we will be serving her unborn child in the same way. We will never be manipulative or harsh in our speech. The Angel will always give good information, loving guidance, and suggestions. Mom will make the important decisions that affect her and her child’s life and she will be the one who lives with the consequences. We will encourage her to choose a future of life and love for herself and her baby without ever coercing her.
The Gabriel Project Mission Statement

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, “that all may be one... as we are one” (Jn 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself. Gaudium et Spes (24)

The Gabriel Project is a Pro-Life movement offering parish-based pastoral care to women in a crisis pregnancy. Gabriel volunteers

- Understand their apostolate as a work of Evangelization, meeting those who suffer where they are, helping them to come to the Church for help and support. The Volunteer brings Christ to Mom in her own person. The volunteer meets Christ in Mom’s person.

- Illustrate and live out the like-with-like apostolate of the laity through an apostolate of friendship and of presence, relying on their own special gifts. Apostolicam actisitatem, Decree of the Apostolate of Lay People - Vatican II.

- Encourage collaborative ministry working in solidarity with all the other ministries and apostolates in the parish and Diocese, i.e., parish social ministry, Catholic Charities, Pro-Life Medical Practice, etc.

- Are drawn closer to God, through acts of self giving to others and through a greater reliance on prayer and worship in their own lives.

- Offer the opportunity for personal and sacramental reconciliation and healing so needed by so many today. Dives in Meseracordia, John Paul II.

- Implement The Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life through this pastoral response to pregnant mothers in need and their unborn children.
What is the goal of the Gabriel Project?

- To help Mom appreciate her child as a gift from God as our Blessed Mother accepted the message of the Angel Gabriel that she would carry her son, the Son of God.

- To live the charism of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth by going out in haste to greet any Mom in need by bringing Jesus to her and by helping her in any way we can.

- To enable the pastor to represent to the mother and child the spousal fatherhood of God.

- To seek God’s perfect model for motherhood, Our Blessed Mother, Mary.

- To witness to the community a respect and reverence for life, and unconditional love. To win all hearts to Jesus Christ and to make Him known and loved by everyone.

- To help Mom with all her practical needs.

- To offer Mom unconditional love in an apostolate of friendship throughout her pregnancy.
II. Role of the Angel

A. Keeping Spiritually Fit

1. Taking Inventory – Self Examination

The choices we make determine the person we become. Each of us has experiences in our past and present that make up who we are and forms how we look at life and how we deal with others. When we are involved in helping others it is important to take a serious look at ourselves. If we have deep hurts in our past that have not healed, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to be an effective helper to someone else. We are all wounded healers who must, through God’s merciful love, heal our own wounds while trying to heal others. Look at your past and present. Are there situations or stresses where it will be difficult for you to be objective while listening to and advising another person who is suffering because of your own unresolved difficulties?

It may help you to do some self-reflection, prayer, discernment and journaling before making the decision to be a Gabriel Project Angel. Does your prayer life or relationship with God needs strengthening? Do you have some questions about your faith or the church?

Apart from contact with the Moms in crisis, there are other ways one can work with the Gabriel Project. We must be spiritually and emotionally available to Mom to help her the way Christ wishes. Clearing out the cluttered areas of our lives makes room for loving others.

2. Prayer and Worship

Prayer and Worship are at the center of our lives as Catholics. How is Jesus present in your life? Are you living a life of grace by receiving the sacraments often, particularly Mass and Reconciliation? Do you spend time in prayer, both our beautiful Catholic prayers as well as those spontaneously spoken from your heart? Have you taken the time to be silent and listen to what God is calling you to do in your life? Do you go to Him in prayer during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or through reciting the Rosary?

Whatever you do to nurture your spiritual life you will need to intensify it. As we take this journey with Moms in need, difficulties will arise and we will need the help only God can give. If we keep our fountain of grace, given to us by the Holy Spirit, full, it will overflow naturally to others. Remember, “Ask and you shall receive.”

3. Made In His Image

When working with Mom we must always remember that God created each of us in His image and we are all equal in His sight. Our faith, morals, relationships, manner of dressing, social skills may often be different from Mom’s. We must forget our own egos, our own preferences and comfort zones when it comes to loving. We must not expect someone, to suddenly take on our value system or way of thinking, even when we know they are living outside the Church. We must treat all our Moms with the utmost respect and dignity, just as Christ would. The appropriate time will come to challenge someone’s choices out of love and concern for them, but loving Mom unconditionally must be our first priority.
4. We cannot give what we do not possess

As Mary visited Elizabeth after the Annunciation, Mary took with her the greatest treasure she had, Jesus in her womb. The baby in Elizabeth’s womb leapt for joy! As we visit Mom, we must remember the greatest treasure we have to share with her is Jesus Christ. If we do not have Jesus in our hearts through the Holy Spirit how can we share Him with someone else? He calls us to be aware of His presence in our lives, to share the love and joy and peace that His presence gives us.

How is Jesus present in your life? If He is not present in your life how can you bring Him to our Moms in need? Maybe, in calling you to this apostolate, God is also offering you an opportunity to get to know Him better. **Remember that the Gabriel Project is Pastoral Care not just Social Work and you cannot bring God to others if you do not know Him yourself.**

5. A Privilege to Serve

When the Angel works with Mom, she is representing the pastor, the bishop and the diocese: she is acting on behalf of the Church. This is a great privilege and a great responsibility.

The Angel

- should keep accurate records of all she does with Mom and insure that the records are up to date and properly stored
- should always treat Mom and Mom’s story with complete confidence, only giving others details on a need to know basis e.g. referral to the hospital
- the angel must not give identifying details about Mom unless absolutely necessary

6. Motivations / Attitudes

Those who feel called to serve the Lord by helping Moms through the Gabriel Project are motivated by their love for God and for others. Individuals volunteer for different reasons, such as:

- a desire to give back to others because we have been given so much ourselves
- a desire to right the tragic wrong of abortion
- healing from a past abortion, adoption, or miscarriage in our own lives

Whatever the reason, our **primary motivation must be love and mercy for the mom who has come to us for help. We are called to serve those most in need and to show them the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.** Loving and caring for Mom must always come before satisfying any other self-interested reasons. Are you thinking primarily of “saving her baby”? Do you want to show her where she went wrong? Do you want to tell her what she should do? We help Mom’s baby by helping her. We are not here to argue points on the life issues with her. We are not Gabriel Angels to fulfill our own agenda. We are not engaged in political activity. Helping Mom is not a means to that end.

Without taking the time to show her how much you love and care about her, you are not serving her as Christ would. How, then, is she to come to know the love of Christ through us? As the cliché says, “They don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Would you?
7. Practical Spiritual Preparation for a Visit

As you prepare to visit with Mom, always pray to the Holy Spirit that you will use His words and be constantly guided by Him in everything you do with her. Prepare yourself by saying a short prayer for her and her baby before each visit. Be bold in your love for the Lord by sharing glimpses of Him through your words and actions. Set aside personal concerns and be totally attentive to how Mom is feeling and doing.

Take something with you to leave with her that will remind her of our Lord and His love and concern for her (i.e., prayer card, rosary, book of meditations for moms, a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe or Madonna of the Streets, a Bible).

Always be charitable in your speech about and to her. We must serve her as we would serve Christ and we must try to serve her as Christ would.

We must understand the difference between our desires and our goals.

- **Our desire** would be that the Moms we work with will have happy endings (two parent families, holiness, chastity, mental health, physical health, emotional health, spiritual health, steady job, all bills paid, etc.)

- **Our goal** is to serve each woman we meet with the love of Christ to the best of our ability. We work towards our goals (that is something we have control over), but we pray about our desires and leave those in God’s hands (we do not have control over those things)

We must never try to manipulate or persuade a woman to make a decision that is not her own. This is a serious violation of her integrity and dignity. She is the one to make responsible decisions for her future. Whatever she decides about the future of her pregnancy, there will be some tough times. When staying up all night with a crying baby or grieving over the baby that someone else is raising, she will need strength to get through. If you or someone else has made the decision for her (whether it be parenting or adoption), the resolve it takes to get through those tough times may not be there because she is blaming someone else for the decision.

If she ultimately makes the tragic decision to go through with an abortion after you have given her all the information about the devastation it will cause in her life and offered her material, financial and emotional help; it is still her decision. We are responsible for giving her all the help we can and for praying for God’s divine mercy and intervention on her behalf.

Always let her know that you will love her no matter what decision she makes. Do not carry her guilt or feel that you have failed because she decided to say ‘no’ to God’s gift of life. Remain faithfully in prayer for both mother and child.
B. Communication and Listening Skills

1. The Confidential Intake Form

The Confidential Intake Form is the most important document that is used. All Moms’ information is included in this document. At the first and all follow up interviews, all information is recorded on the intake sheet.

The Gabriel Angel must review Mom’s case with the Parish Gabriel Coordinator. When Mom has delivered her baby, all information must be given to the Parish Coordinator.

This information is confidential and can only be used for the precise purpose of helping Mom. For liability purposes, an accurate and full record is required. A copy of all information must be sent to the diocesan Gabriel Project Arlington office.

2. Interpersonal communication

“They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

At the root of all successful communication is treating Mom as you would wish to be treated yourself. Communication refers to all meaningful exchanges between Mom and her Angel. It is not just words, but it is the meaning of these words as understood by Mom and her Angel. Misunderstanding can readily occur. Hence, there is the need for the Angel to prepare herself, and learn on the job, the art of communication.

We take part in interpersonal communication all the time, with our families, friends, and colleagues at work. As caring helpers we must understand that **listening is more important than talking.** It is through listening that you discern the details of Mom’s story. You must never jump to conclusions about Mom or stereotype her. You must never interrupt or correct Mom. Through listening, you lead Mom to come to know and understand herself and her situation. Finally, attentive listening allows Mom to begin to regain self respect when the angel accepts her unconditionally.

When you listen, you listen with

- Your ears – to hear her story, the way the story is told, what Mom understands.
- Your eyes – to see her body language and facial expressions.
- Your undivided attention – to focus completely on Mom, not yourself.
- Your heart – to allow Mom to confide and trust in you, which takes time; to show love, sympathy and compassion for Mom.
- Your self - to be present to her; Mom is not a client or unit of mass data to be processed, she is a person who needs to meet with and be loved by another person.

Communication can be

- the spoken word.
- body posture and gesture.
- voice tone and inflection.
Of these, the most telling is voice tone and inflection, then body posture and gesture and then the spoken work, yet we often tend to put more importance on the spoken word.

In one-on-one relationships, we continuously communicate whether we speak or not. The effective Angel must become aware of the impact her tone of voice, inflection, body posture and gestures have on Mom. Angels must know how to evaluate non-verbal communication from Mom to gain a better understanding of her situation.

3. Reconciliation and Healing

Reconciliation and healing is central to helping Mom. Only in this way will she be able, with God’s love and help, and the help of her Angel to bring order, peace and fulfillment into her life, whatever the difficulties.

The Angel must bring Christ to Mom in her person, helping her in practical ways, always showing concern for Mom not herself. This is the new evangelization.

The Angel must pray for Mom and place her in God’s hands, waiting for Mom to respond to the working of the Holy Spirit. Often we will not see this happen but the Gabriel Project is full of wonderful stories of conversion.

In coming to know God is so full of love for each of us, so full of mercy, Mom, both Catholic and non-Catholic, is open to admitting fault on her part and aware of the need for forgiveness, from others and from God. This is the beginning of true Reconciliation.

The release from sorrow and burdens, the relief in being back with God and the Church, the peace which follows confessing one’s sins, cannot be described. Mom is back in the land of the living. The only true healing with true peace follows sacramental reconciliation and absolution.

Only God can forgive and heal us fully. He will help us to forgive others if we only ask. Psychotherapy or counseling is not a substitute for reconciliation and healing.

The Angel must remember that the priest is available to help ALL Moms and she must tell Mom she can go to him for spiritual advice, guidance and sacramental reconciliation.
III. How is the Gabriel Project implemented in the parish?

One person, the Gabriel Project Coordinator, with a few volunteers will accept the task of getting the Gabriel Project started. After attending the Gabriel Project Training, they will form the parish Gabriel Project. It will take persistence and commitment for some time to get an active Gabriel Project firmly in place, but with reliance on God’s help, it will happen.

1. Permission from your pastor

Present the Gabriel Project to your pastor and seek his approval to proceed. Inform the parish council and/or finance council about the Gabriel Project. The diocesan Gabriel Project Arlington office should be contacted for information and training.

2. Introduction to the entire parish - Gabriel Sunday

Meet with your pastor to plan how the Gabriel Project will be presented to the parish. It is essential the whole parish know about the Gabriel Project.

- Pick a Sunday with readings which tie in with the Gabriel Project. October, which is Respect Life Month, January, March 25 the feast of the Annunciation, and/or May are good times to introduce the Gabriel Project.
- The Sunday before insert a flyer in the bulletin preparing the congregation for Gabriel Sunday.
- On Gabriel Sunday, have someone speak at all the Masses about the Gabriel Project. The speaker may be the pastor or someone who is involved with the Gabriel Project and is a good spokesperson.
- Include the Gabriel Project in the prayers of the faithful.
- Brochures with volunteer sign-up cards are made available in the pews or at a table near the entrance of the church where parishioners can sign up to volunteer or donate money if they desire. During the presentation, draw these materials to the attention of the congregation.
- Ask the congregation to pray about the area of work God is calling them to do with the Gabriel Project. Request the prayerful support of the entire parish for the Gabriel Project.
- On Gabriel Sunday or at another designated time, the pastor can bless the parish’s Sign of Life.

3. The Sign of Life and other necessary materials

The Sign of Life is a 4’ x 6’ wooden freestanding sign with a message and image of the Madonna of the Streets. The sign serves as a witness to the entire community and advertises the church’s willingness to help a pregnant mother in need. The following materials are available through the Gabriel Project Arlington office

- The Sign of Life
- Mother and Baby Books
- Cards, Brochures and Posters
- Each Angel receives an Angel Book and a Gabriel Manual at training
4. Angel Training

A list of volunteers is gathered. All Gabriel Angels must attend an Diocesan sponsored training at the parish or at the Diocese before seeing Mom. This is imperative. The Angels could obtain continuing Education by having regularly Scheduled Gabriel Project Workshops at the parish. The diocesan Gabriel Project Arlington office provides training regularly and all training materials.

5. Finances

A separate GPA parish bank account is not needed for the GPA ministry at the parish.

For the GPA Sign of Life banner, a donation can be given to the GPA main office by the parish to cover the cost of this minimal expense. Training and all other materials are provided free of charge by the GPA main office.

If there are ever any financial requests from GPA moms, they are always to be directed to the GPA main office at (703) 841-3810.

Monetary donations can be mailed to the GPA main office to be used for client care only.

Please contact the GPA main office about fundraising opportunities, such as the annual Advent Gift for Life campaign, Baby Bottle Collections, Adopt-a-Mom sponsorships in helping to raise funds for client care only.

6. Monthly support meeting

Plan a monthly meeting so that all the volunteers can get together and keep in close contact with one another for support, encouragement, accountability, spiritual enrichment, and continuing education. Use this time wisely and fruitfully. After each meeting everyone must leave with a new idea, new knowledge, and new inspiration or renewed motivation to continue as an Angel.

Start each meeting in the presence of God. Plan to get together for a special Mass, the Rosary or Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, before your meetings. Each parish Gabriel Project must have a coordinator and volunteers to do different tasks within the Gabriel Project. Each parish Gabriel Project will be unique in its character because of differences in resources available, number of volunteers, and demographics within the community. Practical Guidelines for running meetings can be provided.

7. Major Catholic Support Services

The Gabriel Project works in collaboration with other parish and Diocesan Agencies to provide the best of care, mostly free, for Mom.

- **Pre-Natal, Delivery and Post-Natal Care** By law, each Hospital must provide charitable services to indigent patients to be eligible for Government Monies. This includes Catholic hospitals.

  - Ideally, Mom should be cared for throughout her pregnancy by a Catholic Health Care Provider. If she must attend the Public or non-Catholic Health care Systems, she is very likely to be offered Sterilization, Contraception, Depo-Provera or IUD’s. Abortion may also be offered, particularly if there is fetal malformation or disease. See how the Angel can protect Mom.
- **Mother & Baby Assistance** for the Gabriel Project. **Collaborate with the nearest CPC when hosting** Parish baby showers to collect supplies for Mothers & Babies in need. Organize a Baby Shower or Bassinet Sunday, on Mother’s Day, in October, or some other time. MAKE IT AN ANNUAL EVENT.

- **Project Rachel** is the outreach to women (and men) who have had an abortion or been involved in an abortion decision, offering confidential care, counseling, reconciliation and healing.

- **Society of St. Vincent de Paul** provides person to person services to individuals in need, giving emergency assistance with food, clothing, rent and utilities.

- **Fertility Awareness and Natural Family Planning**, is offered through the diocesan Family Life Office to help couples understand the gift of their own fertility when planning their families.

- **Parish Social Ministry**, usually an outreach of Catholic Charities, provides professional social service at the parish and helps Gabriel Moms obtain their benefits including Medicaid, WIC, etc.

- **Catholic Charities**, among its many services has:
  - **Services to Pregnant Adolescents and their families.** These services are particularly helpful when working with minor children who are pregnant. (under 18 yrs), where medical, psychological and legal difficulties require professional help.

  - **Adoption, foster care, and post adoption services.** All adoptions must go through a reputable Catholic adoption agency if possible. Catholic Charities will work with the local Gabriel Project in providing workshops on this and other topics. **NEVER ARRANGE A PRIVATE ADOPTION FROM THE GABRIEL PROJECT.**

8. **The Michaels**

The Michaels are men in the parish committed to helping Mom by supporting the Gabriel Angels. The GPA Parish Coordinator ensures that if a male volunteer is helping a Mom a female volunteer should always accompany the Michael angel. All GPA Moms need to be contacted by female volunteers only due to protect the integrity of the program. All requests for Michael support are channeled through the GPA Parish Coordinator who maintains a roster of men available for:

- meeting with the father-to-be or, in his absence, with the mom-to-be or both as a mentor,
- transportation to an appointment or other places with proof of up to date liability insurance,
- auto & household repairs,
- financial advice,
- assistance in finding employment, and
- giving masculine example and help.
9. Help from the parish

Many parish volunteers and organizations want to help the Gabriel Project. Suggested tasks for these volunteers are:

- **Collaborate with nearest CPC when** organizing the Annual Parish Baby Shower, collecting maternity and baby items or shopping for baby items at garage sales.
- Transportation to and from doctor’s appointments (some volunteers may want to reserve a day or morning once a week to take women to their destination. Company is very important as Mom may feel pressured to abort or contracept by the medical service).
- child care
- income tax preparation
- car and appliance repair
- meal preparation
- fundraising

10. Stewardship

You may get more items donated then you need at a particular time. Through parish donations, baby showers and bassinet Sundays the parish Gabriel Project will receive maternity clothes, baby clothes and baby items. Keep an inventory of items available. Items need to be culled for usability and safety especially items for a baby. Make sure they are in good repair, clean and usable. Baby cribs and car seats are of special concern and must meet federal standards. Are they safe for a small child? Someone who has storage space and time to keep track of items may want to be in charge in this area. A clean and secure place to store the items with easy access for angels will be important. All items must be given freely to Mom with no strings attached just as they have been donated to the Gabriel Project. However, as there is always a shortage of car seats and cribs, they can be lent to Mom. Items collected at each parish may be available as needed to other parish Gabriel Projects in the diocese.

11. Transportation

From time to time, Moms may need transportation to an appointment or other place. Before an Angel or Volunteer transports Mom in their vehicle, they must be able to show proof of up to date liability insurance.
12. Commitment

A Gabriel Angel is committed to:

- replying to Mom promptly
- checking up on her regularly
- praying for her daily
- arranging for services and responses to needs
- keeping all communications and information confidential
- be available when Mom needs a listening ear
- communicating with the parish coordinator
- attending support meetings

If an Angel is going on vacation, is overwhelmed with a family situation or for some reason cannot be available as an Angel, she must notify the parish Gabriel Project Coordinator that she is temporarily unable to fulfill her commitment.

The GPA Parish Coordinator is committed to:

- knowing all the angels
- matching each Mom with an angel
- communicating training, meeting times and workshop times
- communicating with the pastor
- encouraging collaborative ministry
- following up with angels concerning the Moms they are helping
- mailing in the Confidential Intake Forms or other information

13. Commissioning of Volunteers and Angels

Once you have volunteers committed and angels trained they must be recognized in front of the church community with a commissioning ceremony during Mass.
IV. How does the Gabriel Project work?

1. The Initial Call
When a woman calls for help on the Central Phone Line, 1-866-444-3553, a Gabriel Project Staff completes an **Intake Form**, after assessing the Mom’s needs and meeting with the Gabriel Project Director the staff member contacts the Parish Coordinator at the Church closest to where the Mom lives. The Parish Gabriel Coordinator contacts a trained Angel in her parish. The Angel calls Mom and sets up their first visit at the parish. **The Gabriel Angel should always meet mom at the parish for her own protection unless other approved arrangements have been made with the consent and knowledge of the Project Director and the Parish Coordinator.** It is imperative that the Angel returns the Mom's call within two days. A system must be set up to assure Mom has been contacted and is getting the help she needs.

2. The Central Phone Line, 1-866-444-3553
Gabriel Project staff members answer the Central Phone Line. Bilingual staff members are available to talk to Hispanic Moms. The parish signs will display the Central Phone Line number.

3. Assessing Mom’s needs
As the Gabriel Project Staff listens to mom, she keeps filling in the intake sheet. *See below*

- She prioritizes and lists her most immediate, basic needs.
- Discusses with the services that Gabriel Project can provide and how Gabriel Project can assist her with her specific needs.
- She gives the Mom specific tasks: Obtained benefits WIC etc? have Medicaid? seen a doctor?
- If necessary, refers her to the appropriate agency but always emphasizes of Gabriel Projects availability for additional assistance.
- If the Mom wants an Angel assigned to her. The Gabriel Project Staff contacts the Parish Coordinator at the Church closest to where the Mom lives. The Parish Gabriel Coordinator contacts a trained Angel in her parish. The Angel calls Mom and sets up their first visit at the parish.

*Remember, the Angel is a mentor and friend for Mom in need.* The Gabriel Project Arlington office is a referral service and the Angel becomes the mentor and friend so keep in contact with Mom throughout her pregnancy.

4. The Confidential Intake Form
**The Confidential Intake Form is the most important document each Angel will use.** A copy of the Central Phone Line Volunteer's Intake Form must be forwarded to the Angel who is helping her. All Moms’ information is included in this document. At the first and all follow up interviews, the Angel will record all information on the intake form.
The Gabriel Angel must review Mom’s case with the Parish Coordinator. This information is fully CONFIDENTIAL and can only be used for the precise purpose of helping Mom.

For liability reasons, an accurate and full record is required. When Mom has delivered her baby, all information must be given to the Parish Coordinator. The Confidential Intake Forms must be sent to the Arlington Diocese - Gabriel Project Arlington office. The Parish Coordinator may keep a copy.

5. Meeting with Mom

Always pray before you meet with Mom. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak through you and give you the right words to bring Christ into Mom’s heart. It is essential Mom and the Angel meet at the church in a relatively private, comfortable setting. Ask your priest or deacon to greet Mom. A prayer or a blessing can be an incredible witness to a woman who has known few responsible, caring men in her life. The Michael’s can also greet Mom with the angel in the absence of the priest. Do not be afraid to ask Mom to pray with you. Do not travel alone or at night in an unknown area.

6. Listen to Mom’s story

When visiting with Mom – listen. Let her tell her story, her situation, without input or interruption from you. Be an active, attentive listener. This will tell Mom how much you want to be there for her. The opportunity to give advice, suggestions, and/or comments will come much later as you build trust and rapport with her. She will be able to do most of her own problem solving as she talks through her difficulties. Give her the support and encouragement she needs through the information and resources necessary to solve her own problems.

7. To do list/Schedule next meeting

- Set some goals for Mom and yourself to accomplish before the next visit (See Mother and Baby Book)
- Give a reasonable time to accomplish the tasks.
- Set a time for the next visit at the parish, then call and remind her a day or two in advance. Many times if you do not take the initiative to contact her between visits and encourage her, you may never hear from her again. If she leaves do not be discouraged. You were there for her at the right time
- Let Mom know you are there for her and can call you when she needs to talk
V. How the Angel Protects Mom

There are certain services that Mom may need where Catholic standards are not maintained. In these circumstances the angel must accompany Mom. This is particularly true in the areas of sterilization, contraception and abortion.

1. Obtaining WIC and Other Benefits

All Moms applying for such benefits are routinely offered contraceptive advice. Mom may think she must accept the contraceptive advice to obtain her benefits. She may also be ignorant of the effects of contraception on her body and spirit.

If Mom is delivers in a public or non-Catholic hospital and particularly if she has more than three children, she will be offered tubal ligation or contraceptives, particularly Depo-Provera.

If Mom is battered and needs refuge, most women centers are pro-abortion and in favor of sterilization, contraception and divorce.

If Mom is raped and brought to a public or non-Catholic hospital she will routinely be given the morning after pill to induce abortion if conception has taken place. She may not be fully informed about the procedure or treatment.

If raped, Mom may take precautions to prevent conception from taking place. However, once conception takes place, nothing may be done to interfere with the pregnancy.

Virginia has a web page (http://www.dss.state.va.us/) to access information on social services available through the Department of Health, which includes details about all the programs and benefits available to Mom and lists local public assistance offices by zip code.

2. Crisis Pregnancy Centers

Many Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs), whether independent or under the CareNet umbrella are outreaches by Evangelical Christians. They ask their volunteers to sign a statement of faith, which is not in accord with Catholic teaching. Moms who are referred to CPC’s may be proselytized. Care should be taken in contacting CPC’s for any services including sonograms and pregnancy tests.

Gabriel Project Arlington makes arrangements with and uses local Catholic medical services when a Mom’s circumstances do not permit her to receive care through the public health care system. **You are not competent to provide medical care and if a medical question arises please refer her back to her OB/GYN. In case of an emergency call 911.**
3. When Mom is Abused

This is NOT a service the Gabriel Project provides. Refer her to the Diocesan Social Services provided by Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100). If she has been assaulted or threatened tell her to call the Emergency Telephone Line – 911. Remember, most Women’s Centers which help battered women are pro-abortion and in favor of contraception and divorce. Very often Mom will refuse to press charges and go back to a violent household. A Maternity Home or Maternity Shelter can offer Mom a place of respite and care for her pregnancy until she can diffuse her situation. If this situation arises please contact your Parish Coordinator so that the Gabriel Project Arlington office may be informed about the current situation and advice given.

4. When Mom is a Minor

Our Diocese has a special Social Service program for pregnant minors (up to age 18 yrs). The Gabriel Project Arlington office works with Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100) to meet minor Moms needs.

- In many states, including Virginia, it is not a crime for a 17 year old to run away, but it is a crime for someone to harbor a minor who has run away. You should immediately seek advice from your GPA Parish Coordinator, the Gabriel Project Arlington office, Pastor and/or Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100).

- Gabriel Project Arlington office obtains parental consent for a minor to transport or get medical care for her.

- It is a crime in Virginia not to report child abuse (ie. Sexual abuse & physical abuse).

a. When a minor Mom is being forced to have an abortion

If a minor believes she is being forced to have an abortion, by the father of the child or her parents, she has a legal right to refuse to have an abortion. She may leave home to meet with someone for protection or advice. Meet Mom at the Church, involve your Pastor in this situation, inform the Gabriel Project Arlington office, and Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100). It is not a crime to give Mom advice. It is a crime to take a minor from her home. This is kidnapping.

b. Finding support for Mom

Ask her if anyone in her family supports her decision to keep her baby, an aunt, grandmother, older sister, etc… If not, does she have a friend who will take her in or to a shelter?

It is very important the Angel does everything to reconcile Mom with her parents, husband or other family members. The pastor, her friend's parents or the social worker can talk to her parents on her behalf. Often, parents of a pregnant minor need time to accept this new reality. Time and prayer may be enough to soften a parent’s resolve and accept their daughter’s pregnancy – two to four weeks.
c. What if the abortion is already scheduled?

Advise Mom to leave her home. Inform the Gabriel Project Arlington office and Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100). This is a serious situation in which the pastor must be involved. The Angel must always meet her at the parish with the Pastor. Under no circumstances will the Angel pick the minor up from her home and take her away. This is kidnapping.

d. When a minor becomes a runaway

If a minor has already left home of her own free will and is living on the street or staying with friends, Mom is a runaway. You may be able to convince Mom to talk to her parents with you, the Pastor or a member of the Social Service about her pregnancy. Often, the resistance parents show toward their daughter can be ameliorated when another adult with good and practical information steps in.

e. Family reconciliation

The most desirable outcome is to reconcile the family. Arrangements must be made for follow up family counseling with the local parish priest and appropriate Catholic family counseling agency. Although he has no legal rights, it is important to be sensitive to the father of the unborn child and his family, and include them in the reconciliation process.

5. When Mom Speaks Only Spanish

Spanish speaking angels must be available to work with Spanish speaking Moms or a Spanish speaking volunteer must be available to translate and make it possible for the Angel to serve Mom. Spanish materials must also be available for Mom. Be sensitive to the fact that the Hispanic culture has a view and understanding of life and family that is different from those of us born in the United States. Children are considered a national treasure in Mexico. The Hispanic Apostolate in the Diocese and the Spanish-speaking community in the closest parish to mom that offers Spanish Mass can be of great assistance.

6. When Mom wants an Abortion

When abortion-minded mothers call the Central Phone line our trained staff responds to the Mom with love and compassion advising her of her real choices and of the help available to her through the program. Abortion-minded calls will not be forwarded to a Gabriel Project Parish. If however, you do get a parish referral of an abortion-minded woman don’t panic, keep your wits about you, take a deep breath and, prayerfully reflect on your role as the heart, hands, eyes and ears of God to Mom.

Reach out in love to help her. Your tone of voice and way of talking to her tell her much more about you than anything you can say does. She will judge whether you are loving and trustworthy by your attitude and way of behaving towards her. Let her know how much you want to help her and all the ways that you can help her. Be gentle and accepting.
7. What about Adoption?

- **What is adoption?** Adoption is the birth Mother’s choice to permanently and legally entrust her child to the care of someone else. Mom may choose to remain involved in her birth-child’s life, but the adoptive couple becomes the child’s parents.

- **What types of adoption does the Gabriel Project Support?** The local Catholic Adoption Agency, Catholic Charities Children’s Services, handles adoptions. If a Catholic Agency is not available, remember Adoption is big business with only one baby available for every 40 couples who want to adopt. Working with a Catholic Agency prevents Mom from being abused and financially exploited.

The Gabriel Project is not an adoption agency and must NEVER be involved in private adoptions. Adoptions are beyond the competency of the Gabriel Project Arlington.

8. Working with Mom’s Support System

Help Mom identify her support system and encourage her to reestablish contact with her family, friends, church, and co-workers. Encourage Mom to change her life by avoiding bad companions, disordered environments and ways of life that are unhealthy. Help her seek companionship and friends who are life giving. Encourage Mom to come to know God, her Father in heaven and His only beloved son, Jesus Christ, her spiritual support. Always invite Mom to come to church with you.

9. Developing a Relationship with Mary

Give Mom a holy card or picture of Mary and remind her that Mary once was an unwed mother who trusted that all things were possible with God. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe may be especially meaningful to Mom, as Mary is 8 months pregnant in this image.

10. When Mom Needs a Place to Stay

**Housing is a difficult issue in any city such as in the Northern Virginia Area,** therefore, Mom's first and best resources are her family and friends. Homelessness is not a healthy situation for mother or her unborn child. **Homeless mothers will not be forwarded to a Gabriel Project Parish.** Gabriel Project Staff will identify places that will provide a home or shelter to expectant mothers, specifically those with a Catholic identity that can be used in the event a Mom needs a place to stay. In general, Gabriel Angels should not provide housing to Moms.

Many good hearted families are open to having a Mom come into their home to live until her circumstances improve or until the baby is born. These are called Shepherding Homes, which are available through **Catholic Charities Children’s Services (703-425-0100)**. Great caution is used in screening a Mom before allowing a family to take her into their home. A Mom who is unstable or dysfunctional could be very disruptive to a peaceful home. A loving environment can have a positive effect on Mom.
11. When Mom Needs Monetary Assistance

If Mom asks for monetary assistance, the Angel must inquire what the monies are needed for and why. Inform your GPA Parish Coordinator and the Gabriel Project Arlington office. Remember, the Gabriel Project offers immediate and practical help, not monetary assistance.

Fulfilling a monetary request means approaching parish organizations, such as Parish Social Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul, and the Knights of Columbus. **Under no circumstances will the Angel hand cash to Mom.** The Gabriel Project Arlington office mails or delivers a check to the debtor with the check made out to the debtor on Mom’s behalf.
VI. When Mom Wants To Talk About Her Fertility

The following is information that can be used to educate Mom on alternatives to contraception and sterilization.

1. Fertility Awareness & Natural Family Planning (NFP)

Fertility Awareness & Natural Family Planning (NFP) is usually provided by the diocesan Family Life Office and helps couples understand the gift of their own fertility when planning their family. NFP is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancy. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman’s cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy.

NFP is a sign of the value and dignity of the human person within the sacred and holy marital embrace. Conjugal relations are sacred. Within the context of marriage and family life, NFP promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving nature of marriage, NFP enriches the bond between husband and wife.

Fertility awareness enables the single Mom to learn about her fertility, build self-confidence and recognize the importance of chastity. Private and individual instruction by a qualified Natural Family Planning Practitioner helps provide an on-going support system for a successful transition to the chaste lifestyle for the woman or couple.

2. Methods

There are three major methods of family planning, The Billings Method, The Sympto-Thermal Method by The Couple to Couple League and the Creighton Model.

3. Chastity

The gift of love that we make of ourselves to another is tempered with the virtue of chastity. Chastity allows our love to be free of selfish desires so that we may selflessly give of our self to another. Chastity is more than abstinence. Abstinence implies that we give up something. Chastity gives one the opportunity to develop an intimate spousal relationship that is not dependent on sex.
VII. Referrals/Legal Issues

1. Knowing Our Limitations

   All Gabriel Project Angels are volunteers. Very few are licensed or degreed counselors, doctors, or lawyers. We cannot give medical or legal advice nor do we try to handle on our own, someone who is alcohol or drug addicted or has what seems to be serious mental illness. It is imperative that we learn to know our limitations and have the adequate resource information available for those who need it. When in doubt about whether to refer someone to a professional, call on your pastor or find someone in these various professions who will be advisors to your group. Pray for discernment and prudence. Never give legal or medical advice unless you are a doctor or lawyer and can legally do so.

2. Confidentiality

   Gabriel Project is an apostolate that deals with very personal issues, thus it is imperative that all who are part of the Gabriel Project maintain its integrity by respecting the confidentiality of each person who comes for help. Only in cases of intent to do bodily harm, suicide or suspected child abuse may we break that confidentiality to the proper authorities.

   Confidentiality within the Gabriel Project means that no identifying details or names of Moms are talked about to ANYONE. Within the Gabriel Project, Mom's name and details must also remain anonymous. Discussion may be used for helping and conferring purposes only. Our speech and conduct must be charitable and a reflection of Christ to others. Do not slander or speak ill of anyone; stay with the facts and only the facts.
VIII. Prayers

Gabriel Angel Daily Prayer

Dear Jesus,
I come to you this morning in supplication,
and ask, humbly to enter your Heart of Divine Love,
with (mom’s name) the mother you have
bound to my life, and entrusted to my care,
in your name.

Lord, I am not able to love her like you do,
I am not able to provide for her like you can.
I have nothing good to offer her but You,
who alone are all good, and every blessing to her.

And so Good Shepherd,
please protect her and deliver her from evil this day.
Supply her every need this day, according to
your merciful and kind providence, and bountiful generosity.

Let her experience your infinite tenderness
and gentleness towards mothers and children.

Bind her to you with cords of love, and may
her path today be fragrant with your loving kindness.
And at the end of this day, as at the end of her life,
Enfold her in your eternal embrace in peace.

And now Lord I bring (mom’s name) specific needs to you,
for your loving attention.
(Name any specific intentions)
Thank you Lord for hearing my prayers.

Amen.
The Angelus

6 – 12 – 6

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed
art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy
womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us
sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

And the Word was made Flesh:
And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be
made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of
Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be
brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

______________________________

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you." (Lk 1:28)

"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

(Lk 1:42).

Pray the Most Holy Rosary!
The Angel Book

Volunteer Manual

_Parish-based Pregnancy Assistance Program_
_Office for Family Life_
_Catholic Diocese of Arlington_