

Escort Training with NOAF

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Hi NCI readers! I am Victoria Tiburzi and am writing my first blogpost as an intern for the New Orleans Abortion Fund. My first month at the New Orleans Abortion Fund has gone by quickly. It has been amazing month filled with multiple learning opportunities.

One of the first opportunities my internship afforded me was the ability to be certified as an escort to people seeking abortion care in the New Orleans area. The escort training was taught by the amazing Winter Randall who explained the difference between being for reproductive justice and being pro choice. I felt that her differentiation between these two concepts is important because it is important for people who support pro choice to also be pro reproductive justice. This means

not just being for abortion care and the clinics that provide them, but also, being in support of reproductive care for all types of people regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. People in today's society often times think that being pro choice is all that matters, however, in order to fully be in support of reproductive care for everyone we as a society need to make sure that care is accessible for everyone.

The escort training covered different situations that might occur while we are escorting. The escorts in New Orleans employ a non-engagement tactic with the protestors at the clinic. This means all escorts completely ignore the "antis". I feel their policy is very important because it is very easy for certain actions to get misconstrued in today's day and age. The Feminist Majority Foundation found that "clinics [who] rated their experience with local law enforcement as "poor" or "fair" were significantly more likely to experience high levels of severe violence and harassment (47.0%) than those who rated local law enforcement as "good" or "excellent" (16%) (2016 FMF National Clinic Violence Survey)". Even though the New Orleans clinics have a good relationship with the local law enforcement it is still important for the escorts to understand the risks of escalation that could occur with the protestors. One of the regular escorts at the training shared her encounter of a protestor reaching across her to engage with a person entering the clinic. She said she simply told the protestor to remember the laws in place to protect the escorts and the protestors, and everything was resolved.

I am excited to apply my new escort skills to an actual shift at the clinic. I know when I get into the real world of escorting my training and knowledge of the laws that protect me will be important. Escorting is a way to provide a service that helps and encourages women to take the steps to receive the reproductive care they feel necessary.