

Judith Ann Marie Schlueter LPC, MAPC, RN

Proponent testimony of on House Bill 78

House Health and Aging Committee

Wednesday, February 23, 2011.

Chairman Wachtmann, Vice Chair Goodwin, Representative Fende and members of the Health and Aging Committee, thank you for this opportunity to give sponsor testimony for House Bill 78.

I am Judith Schlueter, LPC, MAPC, RN .

I am a graduate of **Mayo Clinic,- Saint Mary's Hospital- Rochester, Minn.** where in 3 ½ years of clinical rotations never saw nor participated in surgical removal of tonsils or appendix. All clinical experiences dealt with critical life issues. Serving with the expertise of medical and surgical trendsetters in treatment and care of a vast arena of necessary research and expertise, most notable to me was the concern and love with which infants born with hydrocephalus as well as babies born with anencephaly and spinal bifida were cared for and treated.

As a trained and certified **Lamaze Childbirth Educator** with special emphasis on adolescent pregnancy and teen parenting, developed programs for this at risk population. Some of whom later testified before the Wisconsin State Legislature. **From 1973-1986 developed programs for women in crisis pregnancy and post abortion trauma. In 1985-1987 by appointment of Governor Anthony S. Earl served on the Wisconsin Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Pregnancy Services Board**

As a **Professional Clinical Counselor** duly licensed in the State of Ohio I, have practiced in the **Mental Health discipline for almost 20 years specializing in crisis pregnancy and post abortion mental and emotional health issues.** A graduate of Ashland University with MAPC and advanced accompanying credits from the Pontifical College Josephinum have practiced Professional Counseling from 1993-to present during which time founded and continue to direct Bethesda Healing Ministry, a 24X7 Post Abortion Healing Program which uses as its program of choice the healing manual authored in 2003 entitled '*an experience of hope*'. This is the program of choice for Project Rachel/ Washington , D.C.; Kisumu, Kenya and throughout the Columbus Ohio Catholic Diocese.

With a skilled and maturely healed team, chaplains and professionals we record over 3000 contact hours with women wounded by abortion each year.

In the 38 years in which I have cared for women wounded by abortion indicators of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which is organized under the classification of Anxiety Disorders Is clearly identified by every woman I have seen in varying degrees of incapacitation.

Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders DSM-IV TR (American Psychiatric Association) the women seeking assistance from the painful symptoms of Post Abortion Syndrome is significant. (Recognized and identified term for post abortive women in emotional crisis)

The degree to which a woman is incapacitated in my clinical/pastoral experience would list the degree of functioning on a defined scale of 0-100, with assessment of 100 indicating superior functioning and 0 indicating persistent danger of hurting self. Assessment would reveal that most women experience post abortion syndrome in a range of 10-60 and the more years in which a woman emotionally 'defends' (**Denial, Rationalization, Suppression, Repression and Replacement**) protecting against the pain and grief of her abortion (s) the greater the risk of mental illness.

Many mothers explain that the abortion experience for 'them/her' was like a grenade exploding into the emotional, spiritual and relational integrity of her very being and every family and social relationship. In one way or another the mother's ability to 'relate' affected everyone close to her.

"When I killed my baby, a part of me also died."

- **Bethesda Healing Ministry includes in our healing sessions...husbands (those who were a part of the abortion experience; as well as those who married a woman with an abortion history. Grandmother's regretting escorting daughters to the abortion facility as well as grandmother's who sought to prevent the abortion. We see the 'family' system traumatized as well by even one abortion in the immediate family: Communications issues, broken trust, fear of disclosure, loss of self love, fear of emotional rejection.**

In order for a woman to abort her baby, she must first depersonalize what it is that is in her womb....."not a developing baby"

...and then disassociate...." fetal tissue- menstrual tissue' etc

(2) DSM IV TR 309-81 Diagnostic Criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror about the event.

Confusion/Self hatred

Anxiety /Depression

Withdrawal – Isolation-Phobias

Unforgiveness of self and those involved (relational destruction)

Hatred of men-promiscuity “(I am not worthy of a good man...there aren't any good men”)

“I am dirty and used. I hate men and I hate myself.”

Anger /rage “ And I was angry all the time. I killed the only child I would ever have.” (some)

Fear of harm to other children: “ I have had three abortions and now a new baby...I do not feel attachment to this baby. I do not feel love”. (Reported parenting and bonding issues)
(Son attempted to set the house on fire...after Mother shared her secret...family system affected)

- **Restricted range of effect** (emotions are damaged..cannot bond with freedom to love, trust, experience healthy intimacy-(marriage and parenting at risk)
- **Guilt/Shame/Unworthiness:** “ If so many mental health professionals tell me ‘it’s not a big deal..get over it...where can I validate what I am feeling?’” (Despair –suicidal ideation)
- **AND Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings or conversations associated with the trauma..**
 - Every women who comes to our Bethesda home is fearful of being known or recognized. Some sit in the car afraid to come to the door. Some report they cannot attend Church because they feel as though they have a ‘large red A on their foreheads...and everyone MUST know about their abortion”
(Significant substance and drug abuse...anesthetizing feelings. Addictions to food, alcohol, etc.)

C .The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one or more of the following ways:

- ***Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event: “ I will not return to the doctor or facility that did my abortion”...--no medical follow up...asks for names of physicians who are trust worthy...and would have supported their pregnancy” (a number of women report that because they did not have enough money they had the abortion without anesthesia)***
TRAUMA
JUST IMAGINE!

- **Anniversary flashbacks...** notable clinical depression and anxiety recognized as an event time during a particular season or month.
- ***Inability to recall an important aspect of the event:*** *In every group that gathers for post abortion recovery, there are at least two who cannot recall month, date or year of the abortion yet all other details are clear. Some recall a second abortion as they begin dealing with the 1st..and are horrified..but later remember who escorted them.*
- **“Nightmares, frightening dreams,** “ the sound of the drill at the dentist office”.
- **Sense of foreshortened future** (does not expect to have normal life span)
Hopelessness and Helplessness “Suicide ideation”

Symptoms Following Abortion. The additional comments and remarks are those of 38 years involved with mothers wounded by abortion.

Most women wounded by abortion report:

Alienation:

- From God
- From self
- From the baby
- From others

For consideration:

1. What is mental illness?
2. Where does a person cross the line between healthy mental/relational functioning and avoidance of life with accompanying helplessness and relational paralysis?
3. In the past the medical world spoke of ‘cause and effect’. If abortion so traumatizes a women for years if not her entire life, ethically can we continue to provide this response to any troubled pregnancy?

Thank you for allowing me the honor of testifying on this important reality.

Respectfully submitted by Judith A. Schlueter LPC, MAPC, RN

Founder/Director Bethesda Post Abortion Healing Ministry

2744 Dover Rd.

Columbus, Ohio 43209-3020

614-718-0277

Spiritual and Emotional Symptoms Following Abortion

**This list of symptoms has been compiled by women wounded by abortion:
(Circle the ones that apply to you)**

- Confusion/Self Hatred
- Anxiety/Depression
- Withdrawal - Isolation – Phobias
- Un-forgiveness of self and those involved
 - Hatred of men/promiscuity
- Fear of punishment from God/Alienation
 - Fear of harm to other children
 - Fear of becoming pregnant
 - Desire for replacement baby
 - Guilt/Shame/Unworthiness
 - Anger/Rage
 - Sorrow/Grief/Sense of Loss
 - Bitterness/Inability to Trust
 - Inability to make decisions
 - Regret
 - Despair/Suicidal Impulses
 - Hopeless and Helplessness
 - Destructive Self Behavior
- Anniversary Reaction
 - Flashback

Bethesda Post Abortion Healing Ministry
2744 Dover Rd
Columbus, OH 43209-3020
Ministry Lines
614-309-0157 • 614-309-2651
Office - 614-718-0277
www.bethesdahealing.org

Diagnostic criteria for 309.81 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (continued)

- (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior

B. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one (or more) of the following ways:

- (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. **Note:** In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed.
- (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event. **Note:** In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content.
- (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated). **Note:** In young children, trauma-specific reenactment may occur.
- (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
- (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:

- (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
- (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
- (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
- (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
- (6) restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings)
- (7) sense of a foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:

- (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep
- (2) irritability or outbursts of anger
- (3) difficulty concentrating
- (4) hypervigilance
- (5) exaggerated startle response

Bethesda Post Abortion Healing Ministry
 2744 Dover Rd
 Columbus, OH 43209-3020
 Ministry Lines
 614-309-0157 • 614-309-2651
 Office • 614-718-0277
www.bethesdahealing.org

Juc
 16 C
 Dubl