

LET'S TALK

ABOUT

ABORTION,

SOUTH DAKOTA

THE CONVERSATION GUIDE

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ABORTION**

How to have the conversations that lead to change for reproductive rights in South Dakota.

In this guide, you'll find information about how to combat misinformation, how to engage your family, friends, and fellow South Dakotans in conversations about the importance of abortion access for pregnant people and their families, and resources to continue working on this important issue.

There's a lot of incorrect information, misinformation, and even disinformation about abortion. Politicians, anti-abortion activists, and bad actors use this misinformation to twist the narrative about this very common, very safe medical procedure. Women's reproductive health care hasn't always been a political football, but it's the reality of where we are now.

That's where you come in. If a lot of political speeches and talking points, posts online, and conversations with neighbors in person have changed the way South Dakotans feel about this issue, those same tactics can change minds again.

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Change the story on misinformation.

Misinformation, disinformation, half-truths, and lies have been used over the last couple of decades to divide people and polarize the conversation about reproductive health care and abortion care. Why? Because it's easier to gain power by dividing people than bringing them together. It's easier to make sweeping generalizations and one-size-fits-all pronouncements than to listen to the complex and diverse lived experiences of real South Dakotans.

So, talking about abortion starts with knowing how to counter misinformation. For example, there's a process that's being used right now to combat vaccine misinformation. It depends on trusted authorities sharing the facts with the people around them.

01 

State the fact in a clear, relevant, and memorable way.

02 

Call out the misinformation/disinformation.

03 

Show the fallacy at work—information that's being misinterpreted or intentionally made unclear, etc.

04 

Restate the fact to replace the misinformation/disinformation.

An example myth: "Abortion can make people infertile."

- Medical and medication abortions obtained legally are not linked to infertility.
- There's a lot of misinformation about the safety of abortion.
- The minority of people who don't want women to have abortions try to scare people away from having them. They make false claims about the need for more safety, but legal abortions are done in medical facilities that are closely regulated already.
- The reality is that medical abortions are safer than many other outpatient procedures, like colonoscopies. Medication abortions, when legally prescribed by a clinician, are safer still. Carrying an unwanted pregnancy can be far more dangerous and linked to complications that can cause infertility.

If we can spread the truth in a clear and memorable way, we can help stop the spread of misinformation, while also making the truth about abortion more widespread.

ADDITIONAL MYTHS

- 01** **FICTION:** Abortion is physically and mentally harmful.
TRUTH: **Abortions, like other reproductive health procedures, are safe.** They have significantly fewer poor outcomes than your average colonoscopy, for example. They're also much safer than carrying an unwanted pregnancy, which significantly increases the risk of serious complications, anxiety, and the chances a pregnant person will stay tethered to an abusive partner.
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- 02** **FICTION:** Too many people use abortion as birth control.
TRUTH: **The choice to have an abortion is a deeply personal medical decision, one that often happens after talking to trusted family members and physicians.** There are lots of reasons a person might get an abortion, and we can't judge another South Dakotan's decision when we haven't walked in their shoes.
-
- 03** **FICTION:** If it's outlawed, people will no longer receive abortions.
TRUTH: **People sought abortions even when it was illegal, and they still will now.** When governments make it harder to access abortion care, it disproportionately hurts people whose lives are already hard.
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- 04** **FICTION:** There are currently no restrictions on abortion where it is legal.
TRUTH: **Abortion care is one of the most regulated types of medical care.** South Dakotans agree that when someone decides to have an abortion, it should be safe. The vast majority also agree that abortion care should be regulated by medical experts, not by politicians. But as a result of years of targeted laws, doctors are forced to read scripts written by politicians, carry out medically unnecessary ultrasounds, and follow regulations that don't fit the recommendations of the Federal Drug Administration and other nationally recognized medical experts.
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- 05** **FICTION:** Abortion is murder.
TRUTH: **Abortion is a matter of health care, not a criminal act.** Everyone should have the freedom to decide if and when to have children, and what's best for them and their families.
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- 06** **FICTION:** Abortion is never necessary to save a person's life.
TRUTH: **There are absolutely times when it is medically necessary to have an abortion to save a pregnant person's life.** When the worst happens, everyone should be able to work with their physician and their family to make the decision that's right for them—without one-size-fits-all legislation interfering.
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- 07** **FICTION:** You can't be "pro-choice" without being "pro-abortion."
TRUTH: **You can be a champion for your neighbors' freedom to decide their own path without having had an abortion yourself.** If you support everyone's ability to make their own decisions, then we need you to champion equal access for all of us.



The way we talk about abortion can make a big difference.

A lot of barriers have been erected to prevent people from talking about abortion in South Dakota. People are made to feel it's impolite or too political, too full of partisan talking points, too divisive. But the truth is that talking about abortion is the only way to change all this.

Our goal is to build rapport, share connections, and walk in another person's shoes together. This method of deeper, nonjudgmental conversations geared toward sharing values-based, tailored stories with people of various viewpoints is called "deep canvassing." It's been shown to be effective in moving the needle even for people who start out totally opposed. It isn't magic, and it doesn't work every time, or even immediately, but these conversations can change the way we think and talk about abortion. So here's how we go about having conversations that matter.

There are five parts to these effective conversations:

- 01** Ask their opinion about abortion and listen nonjudgmentally.
- 02** Find the common ground in their views and values.
- 03** Share a story that addresses those values.
- 04** Engage with their initial concerns and get them thinking.
- 05** Connect back to abortion access.



We know certain points make sense as a way to frame our conversations for South Dakotans of all walks of life. Here are a few of them:

- **“People should have the freedom to decide if and when to have children”** is a way to frame the ability to access abortion as well as all other forms of reproductive health care.
- **“Whether we personally agree with abortion or not, these deeply personal decisions should be made in consultation with doctors and families.”** We should all be able to make decisions for ourselves, and the government shouldn't be involved in our family planning decisions.
- **“When someone decides to have an abortion, it should be safe. Abortion care should be regulated by medical experts, not by politicians.”** Keeping the politics out of doctors' offices and out of personal medical decisions is something many South Dakotans agree with.
- **“Government regulations don't keep abortions from happening, they just make them harder to get for people whose lives are already hard.”** This isn't just about having a theoretical choice, we need to ensure real access to reproductive health care.

Speaking up can change minds.

US

“It feels like so much of politics right now is only for show. Politicians seem to support things just to make the news. Can you believe some legislators want to make the penalties around abortion even more severe even though most of us support equal access to it?”

OUR NEIGHBOR

“I would never have an abortion myself, and I don't know anyone who has. I guess there are reasons someone might choose to have one, I don't want to *support* abortion.”

“Can you tell me a little about what has shaped your thoughts on abortion?”

“I think life is a gift and should be treated as sacred. I also believe in personal responsibility, which is why there shouldn't be abortions on-demand. But bad things happen to good people, so I guess the option should be there for the worst cases, like rape.”

“You and I both agree that bringing a life into this world is not something to take lightly, which is why it's so important that each of us has the freedom to decide if and when to have children. A neighbor of mine, growing up went to

LET'S BREAK IT DOWN.

1. It's actually pretty likely they do. One in four people will have an abortion in their lifetime.
 2. Many people have a conflicted opinion about abortion. They know life is messy, but have heard misinformation—maybe they grew up hearing scary things about sex out of wedlock and abortion. But we can open up a conversation.
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1. The first step is to ask a question and REALLY LISTEN. South Dakotans agree about more on abortion than you think. Listen for the values they express. You can build bridges with them.

“Can you tell me a little about what has shaped your thoughts on abortion?”

“I think life is a gift and should be treated as sacred. I also believe in personal responsibility, which is why there shouldn't be abortions on-demand. But bad things happen to good people, so I guess the option should be there for the worst cases, like rape.”

“You and I both agree that bringing a life into this world is not something to take lightly, which is why it's so important that each of us has the freedom to decide if and when to have children. A neighbor of mine growing up went to college and got pregnant unintentionally. Her family was unsupportive and she didn't have anyone she trusted to talk to about contraception, so she didn't have access to the tools that would have been best for her. In the end, she made the best decision she could with the options she had, even though most people in her life didn't agree with her decision.

Have you or someone you know ever been in a situation where you knew what was best for you, even though it wasn't what other people thought you should do?”

“I grew up knowing that I was meant to be a mom. I married my husband, and we started a family and I loved it. But I also started working part-time. My parents don't understand why I'd pay for childcare just to go to the office, and they've told me that more than once. But I get to use this whole other set

LET'S BREAK IT DOWN.

1. We don't take the lives of people lightly, either, so we can build here.
 2. Personal responsibility is a great place to connect, too. If we're responsible for our actions and our bodies, then we are in charge of them.
 3. Life is messy, sometimes, even for people trying to do the right thing. This is a great value to connect on.
 4. Again, here's a commonality—when the worst things happen, the decision should be up to a person and their family. No one-size-fits-all rule can encompass all of that.
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1. Here, we're combining a few of our shared values.
 2. This kind of conversation works whether it's your story or the story of a friend or family member. Just make sure it's OK to share someone else's story.
 3. When you don't have access to all your options, you don't have the ability to make the choice that's best for you.
 4. We're putting a personal face on the problem of unequal access to reproductive health care.
 5. Now we ask a question that can walk them through a similar time in their life when they had to stand up for their values in the same way.



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"I grew up knowing that I was meant to be a mom. I married my husband, and we started a family, and I loved it. But I also started working part-time. My parents don't understand why I'd pay for childcare just to go to the office, and they've told me that more than once. But I get to use this whole other set of skills in a way that makes me really happy. Six years later, they still don't understand it, but it makes sense for me and my family."

"So, the freedom to decide for yourself what was right for you and your family is clearly important to you. And someone telling you what they think is right wouldn't stop you from doing what you know is best for you. I think we agree on a lot when it comes to reproductive health care: that we should all have the right to make our own decisions about our bodies, to have children, to not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities."

LET'S BREAK IT DOWN.

1. Hearing what's "right" or "wrong" from others doesn't stop you from knowing what's right for you.
2. We can connect here on the importance of being able to choose for yourself, your own path in life.
3. This is the kind of demonstration of common values you should look for.

1. This is an example of summarizing the values we hold in common. We're focusing on "the freedom to decide" as a value we share (a key message from pg. 4).
2. We're relating her story to that of people seeking abortions, regardless of laws and judgment.
3. And connecting them back to abortion.

When we really listen to our neighbors' values, giving them a way to think about abortion and reproductive justice in a way that connects to them, and telling stories that put a human face to it, we can change minds.

Where you can learn more and share more.

Trusted friends, family, and community members are the people who will change the minds of South Dakotans. It takes more than one conversation to change a person's mind, but a real-life, two-way conversation is the best place to start.

Want to do more? Here are seven ways you can support the fight for reproductive freedom in South Dakota.

1. Take the Pledge: Commit to remain informed and ready for the fight ahead by adding your name to the growing list of action takers in South Dakota at aclusd.org/defend-abortion.

2. Sign up for Text Alerts: Text FIGHT BACK to 826-23 to get alerted for actions near you.

3. Support Abortion Funds: Donate to local abortion funds like the Justice Empowerment Network at jensd.org.

4. Contact Your Lawmakers: Connect with your elected officials often because they need to hear from you. Find tips and resources at aclusd.org/advocacy-resources.

5. Inspire Your Community to Act: Share your story by writing a letter to the editor or publishing a blog on sites like Medium. If you need some help getting started visit aclusd.org/editor.

6. Use Social Media: Use the connections you have online to keep the conversation going and be sure to follow us! Find out accounts at aclusd.org/social.

7. Spread the Word: Share this handout with your peers! You can also text them this link aclusd.org/talk-about-abortion-rights.

Use the QR code below to access these links in one spot!

