



## **VIGIL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS GUIDELINES & PLAN**

NOTE FOR SIDEWALK OUTREACH PARTICIPANTS: This Emergency Operations Plan provides guidance for both 40 Days for Life campaign leaders AND for Sidewalk Outreach participants who have enrolled in 40 Days for Life University’s Sidewalk Outreach training program. If you are NOT a 40 Days for Life campaign leader, some of these recommendations might not apply to you. If you have questions, don’t hesitate to contact [sidewalkoutreach@40daysforlife.com](mailto:sidewalkoutreach@40daysforlife.com).

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## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- You are in control.
- Know your vigil.
- Plan ahead.
- Monitor current events in your area.
- Stay safe (See Appendix B: Commandments of Safety).
- Handle problems promptly.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Do not cause or escalate a problem.
- Never take the offensive or be aggressive.
- If you feel you need outside security, request it through the 40 Days for Life headquarters (See Appendix A: Headquarters Team Contacts).

### **An ounce of prevention...**

- You know your community, participants, and vigil best.
- Tailor the vigil plans for your particular situation.
- Review the plan with your team.
- Encourage your team to ask questions and make suggestions.

### **Don't create your own emergency...**

- If you think something is or may be unsafe, it probably is.
- If certain vigil hours are not safe, contact the 40 Days for Life headquarters to alter the vigil schedule.

### **Create a safer environment...**

- Consider having full-time filming/cameras if you may lawfully do so. Filming people, things, and events in public is generally legal, but some states require notice (a sign that says that you are recording), and some states have state

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FACE Acts that limit filming of certain people and things on abortionist property. Mounted cameras are typically more effective than body cameras, which might be obscured on the sidewalk. Consider signs that announce that filming is occurring.

- If it is dark, provide lighting (check local ordinances).
- Meet with local authorities in advance, get contact information, share the Statement of Peace, and make sure that they know the peaceful, lawful nature of the mission.
- Have as many participants as possible, and never go alone at night.
- Stay off roadways.
- Park your vehicles nearby or in front of the vigil when lawful. Ask groups like churches and schools to attend in their corporate vehicles, such as school and church buses that show insignia.

### **If you see something, say something...**

If you see anything unsafe or illegal, call 911.

### **Know your participants...**

- If someone is likely to or is violating the Statement of Peace, address and correct it.
- Remove grave offenders and habitual offenders and inform them in writing that they are no longer a part of your 40 Days for Life campaign. Keep a copy of what you have sent to them.

**A picture is worth a thousand words: If you can do so safely and lawfully, take video and film.**



## THE SHORT LIST: “WHAT-IFS”

### What If...

#### **We feel unsafe at the vigil site?**

- If you feel unsafe, you are unsafe. If there is suspected criminal activity, **call 911** and notify the 40 Days for Life headquarters team (See Appendix A: Headquarters Team Contacts).
- Leave and pray from a safe place until you feel it is safe to return to the vigil site.

#### **Somebody is threatened, is touched, or has his or her path blocked?**

- Don't retaliate.
- Call 911.
- Get a photo or video of the aggressor and the license plate/vehicle.
- Submit an incident report to 40 Days for Life, and attach a police report if one is filed: [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport)

#### **There is only one volunteer at the vigil site?**

Bring a friend or recruit a prayer partner from your substitute list.

#### **I am concerned a situation with a protester or passerby might escalate?**

- Film and photograph your vigil if you can safely and lawfully do so.
- Call 911 if necessary.

#### **Police or a government authority orders vigil participants to leave the vigil?**

- Be polite.
- Show your permit as applicable.
- Comply.
- Approved local 40 Days for Life campaign leaders can visit [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) to request legal counsel.

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**I find out a rally or political event will be taking place near my vigil site, and attendees or counterdemonstrators are likely to engage or harass vigil participants?**

- Inform your participants.
- Suspend your vigil until it is safe to resume.

**I suspend my vigil, but a volunteer refuses to stay home?**

Tell the volunteer he or she is disassociated from your 40 Days for Life campaign.

**A COVID-19 contact tracer asks for names and contact information of vigil participants?**

Refuse unless the tracer has a valid government order.

**I am asked to promote a candidate for elected office or a slate of associated candidates or a particular platform?**

Do not engage in political activities as a representative of a 40 Days for Life vigil and/or at the vigil, including: advocacy (petitions, fundraising, signs, literature, etc.) related to a particular candidate for elective office.

In short, this means no stumping for candidates and/or their platforms.

**Can I advocate for or against certain “abortion-related” legislation at a vigil?**

Yes, to a limited extent. While the law prohibits soliciting signatures, petitions, and money for or against a particular law, you can and should educate, get out the vote, and encourage NO votes on all pro-abortion legislation and YES on all pro-life legislation that protects life from conception to natural death, including constitutional ballot initiatives (referenda) and state laws and local ordinances by:

1. Handing out educational materials about the referenda/legislation;
2. Encouraging voting (“get out the vote”) in general (but not for particular candidates, parties, or platforms);

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3. Verbally encouraging “VOTE NO” on pro-abortion referenda and legislation and encouraging “VOTE YES” on pro-life referenda and legislative bills that protect life from conception to natural death.

If you have questions, the local 40 Days for Life campaign leader can ask the 40 Days for Life headquarters.

**Can I use my 40 Days for Life email and participant list to educate about or to advocate for or against abortion-related legislation or to encourage voting?**

No, this would violate our confidentiality promise to the participants. You may only use your 40 Days for Life campaign, email delivery tool, and contacts for matters directly related to your 40 Days for Life campaign and NOT for legislative or other matters.

**My volunteers and/or I want to do more to engage in political/legislative activism?**

Do it. But keep it completely separate from your participation in 40 Days for Life. Do not wear 40 Days for Life gear or identify yourself by your 40 Days for Life role when engaging in political advocacy or legislative advocacy beyond the limited legislative advocacy expressly allowed in this document. Do not use your 40 Days for Life campaign to collect petitions or raise funds for candidates, ballot initiatives, or legislative advocacy.

**I want a politician to speak at my vigil?**

See the “Politicians at Events” section of Appendix C: Political Activities Policy and contact the 40 Days for Life headquarters team (See Appendix A: Headquarters Team Contacts).

**Someone purporting to be with the media wants to interview me, but I am unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the reporter or media outlet?**

Email the 40 Days for Life headquarters team. You do not need to give any on-the-spot interviews.



**Any law enforcement agency requests a meeting, an interview, information, or any other communication about 40 Days for Life and/or your activities?**

If any law enforcement agency requests a meeting, an interview, information, or any other communication about 40 Days for Life and/or your activities, we request that the approved local 40 Days for Life campaign leader notify 40 Days for Life immediately by submitting an incident report at [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) before responding or having any further communications.

**I have a legal issue related to my 40 Days for Life campaign?**

The approved local 40 Days for Life leader can submit an intake form at [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) to request help.

## **PROTESTS TARGETING 40 DAYS FOR LIFE**

Many vigil sites attract “counter-protesters.”

**A blessing in disguise?**

- PP has a policy requesting no counter-protesters — they harm PP more than we do.
- Counter-protesters are usually loud, are obnoxious, and draw far more attention than we do.
- Remain calm.
- Don't respond in kind — respond with love.
- Monitor the news and social media chatter and be ready.
- If unsafe, call 911 and move to a safe place to await the arrival of law enforcement.

**What if I think I need outside security?**

On a case-by-case basis, 40 Days for Life may be able to provide outside security. If local leaders feel this is necessary, they can contact the 40 Days for Life headquarters.



If security personnel are assigned, cooperate with them and let them handle potential threats and harm. That is why they are there, and they have the training and experience.

### **What if I disagree with outside security?**

Let the 40 Days for Life headquarters know right away, with specific details.

## **PROTESTS UNRELATED TO 40 DAYS FOR LIFE**

**Civil unrest and violence are taking place across the U.S. and the world. Political division has given rise to protests in many cities.**

- Monitor news, social media, law enforcement websites, and community development websites for permits and scheduled protests, demonstrations, and rallies near your vigil.
- If there is an event with the potential to lead to disruption or civil unrest that affects your vigil, suspend your vigil until the protest is finished.
- Suspended vigils should be moved to a church or churches for prayer and spiritual communion.
- Notify all of your participants.
- Do not mix 40 Days for Life vigils with protests concerning other issues.
- If an unscheduled protest comes your way, suspend your vigil until it is finished — avoid actual engagement AND the appearance of such.
- Do not engage other protesters — it is off mission.
- Do not use 40DFL media to promote or comment on other protests or rallies.

## **POLITICS & POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

Recent elections have been bitterly contested — with abortion in the spotlight.

You may be pressured to use your influence as a local 40 Days for Life leader to support or oppose political candidates, parties, or platforms.



While campaigns may engage in limited, local legislative activism, for the protection of the 40DFL mission, it is critically important to keep your 40 Days for Life campaign completely separate from political activity.

See Appendix C: Political Activities Policy and contact the 40 Days for Life headquarters with questions.

## **COVID-19 AND STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS**

40 Days for Life encourages leaders and participants to follow valid government health orders.

If a stay-at-home or other order is issued in your area and you are unsure whether and how your campaign can obey it, the approved local leader should visit [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](https://www.40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) to discuss options or to request a written legal opinion.



## APPENDIX A: HEADQUARTERS TEAM CONTACTS

In the event of an emergency, please contact 40 Days for Life immediately (and before you go to other organizations or the media).

By contacting your appropriate 40 Days for Life contact right away, we will be best positioned to help you with:

- Answers to legal questions or legal counsel, if your rights are violated, you are given a citation, you are attacked by abortion supporters, you need help interpreting your legal rights, you don't understand how to comply with a stay-at-home order, etc. All requests for legal support or counsel should be submitted at [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) by the approved local 40 Days for Life campaign leader.
- Media interactions.
- Security.
- Replacement supplies.
- On-the-ground support.

### United States and Canada:

CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR  
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**Legal:** [40daysforlife.com/incidentreport](http://40daysforlife.com/incidentreport) (approved local 40 Days for Life campaign leaders only)



## **APPENDIX B: COMMANDMENTS OF SAFETY**

1. Stay safe, always.
2. Try to have at least two vigil participants.
3. Never be alone after dark.
4. Conduct the vigil in a safe and public or otherwise lawful location.
5. If you feel threatened, leave and call the police.
6. If your path is blocked, call the police.
7. If you are touched, call the police.
8. If you can safely do so, photograph/film events.
9. If the police arrive, be polite and cooperative.
10. If you are ordered to leave by a competent government authority, do so and contact 40 Days for Life headquarters.
11. Do not trespass.
12. Do not threaten.
13. Do not touch others.
14. Do not display or discuss weapons.
15. Do not curse.
16. Do not block anyone's path/right-of-way.
17. Obey all laws.



## **APPENDIX C: POLITICAL ACTIVITIES POLICY**

For the protection of the 40 Days for Life Mission, it is essential to keep 40 Days for Life and political activity completely separate. Political activity is a legal term that means:

1. Stumping for a particular candidate;
2. Stumping for a particular platform;
3. Raising money for candidates and platforms;
4. Collecting signatures for a candidate;
5. Holding a rally with only one candidate.

Failure to keep 40 Days for Life out of politics poses many concerns, including:

1. Revocation of 501(c)(3) charitable, tax-exempt status;
2. Fines and/or administrative or court hearings;
3. Dilution of and time away from the mission.

### **What you CAN do:**

1. Encourage everyone to “vote pro-life” at your vigil or campaign events.
2. Encourage people to support pro-life legislation and to oppose pro-abortion legislation in general at your vigil or campaign events.
3. Educate people on pro-life issues and laws that have been passed or are being considered at your vigil or campaign events.
4. Forward proposed state and local pro-life laws and initiatives to 40 Days for Life HQ for further guidance.
5. Encourage people to vote at your vigils and events (“GET OUT THE VOTE”). BUT remember, use of participant information is solely for vigil use, so you can’t send an email to your participants just about voting. You can email them about events that may include speakers and education about abortion-related initiatives and laws.



6. Educate people on state constitutional ballot initiatives (referenda) and legislative bills that address abortion at your vigil or campaign events.
7. Encourage people to VOTE NO on pro-abortion referenda or legislation at your vigil or campaign events.
8. Encourage people to VOTE YES on pro-life referenda or legislation at your vigil or campaign events.

**What you CANNOT do:**

1. Endorse or encourage people to vote for a particular candidate or platform.
2. Endorse a particular political party or party platform. Vigil participants should not wear political apparel or hold political signs while at the vigil site.
3. Raise or accept money for, or give money to, a political candidate, platform, or party.
4. Raise or provide (through your vigil) funds or in-kind donations to endorse or defeat particular legislation.
5. Obtain petitions for a particular candidate, party, platform, legislation, or referenda (except for 40 Days for Life petitions).
6. Use your 40 Days for Life email and participant list to send information about abortion-related initiatives and legislation.
7. Wear 40 Days for Life gear or identify yourself by your 40 Days for Life role when engaging in personal political activism.



## **No Endorsement of or Opposition to Candidates**

On the campaign application, every approved local campaign leader pledges “to keep completely separate from your local 40 Days for Life efforts advocating for or against any candidate for elective office.”

This does not mean that local leaders may not engage in political activity as individuals. They simply cannot do so in their capacity as 40 Days for Life leaders. They cannot use the 40 Days for Life name, mark, webpages, intellectual property, local vigils, volunteer lists, or campaign events to do so.

Furthermore, it does not mean that local campaigns may not support pro-life positions, pro-life ballot initiatives or referenda, and pro-life legislation at their vigils or campaign events. For example, a campaign can promote defunding Planned Parenthood — or even educate on and encourage support for specific legislation (e.g. to defund Planned Parenthood) — at the vigil and in-person campaign events. However, a campaign should not use 40 Days for Life email lists for legislative advocacy.

A campaign should always focus primarily on activities directly related to 40 Days for Life objectives of prayer, fasting, community outreach, and peaceful vigil.



## **POLITICIANS AT EVENTS**

Local 40 Days for Life leaders often like to have politicians speak at their vigils and campaign events.

While 40 Days for Life is not opposed to this, certain precautions must be taken. If you wish to host a politician at a campaign event, please request written clearance from your 40 Days for Life headquarters team contact (See Appendix A: Headquarters Team Contacts). In your request, please provide the following information:

1. What is the politician's name and political party?
2. Who invited the politician? Or did the politician make an unsolicited offer to speak?
3. Are any other politicians invited/attending?
4. Is the politician from the district where the vigil is held? If not, how far away is the district?
5. When is the politician next running for election?
6. What would the politician speak about?

Your primary 40 Days for Life headquarters contact will notify you whether the proposed speaker is approved and will send you further instructions on confirming that the politician understands and agrees to our policies.

A politician can never solicit votes or campaign contributions while speaking at a 40 Days for Life event.

The vigil cannot endorse the candidate or raise money.