

Teens & Abortion

WHY PARENTS SHOULD KNOW



It is simply a fact that adolescents develop physically before fully maturing psychologically and socially.

While adolescents are physically capable of having children, at this point in their psychological development they are more likely to follow their immediate emotional responses than to rationally consider their options and their long term consequences.^{1,2,3}

A teen's biggest concern may be avoiding discovery by her parents or peers or trying to hold onto her boyfriend rather than determining how the birth or abortion of the child may affect the rest of her life.

Teens tend to rely on others when making decisions,⁴ a healthy pattern when those influencing a teen have her own best interests at heart, but an area of concern in situations where the young teens can be exploited by older individuals, such as boyfriends or abortion clinic counselors, who teens view as more experienced and knowledgeable, but may not recognize as having their own agendas.⁵

There are physical, social and psychological consequences of abortion, and these may be worse for teens.

Anyone having a surgical or chemical abortion may face complications such as perforation, scarring, hemorrhaging, infection, or even death.⁶

Women who abort run higher risks of future infertility,⁷ miscarriages,⁸ ectopic pregnancy,⁹ and premature birth of future children.¹⁰ For teens, abortion may mean never being able to have children.

Abortion is an identified risk factor in breast cancer.¹¹ The risk for aborting teens may be even greater, especially since they are not likely to have reaped the protective effect of previously giving birth.¹²

Women who have abortions are also at a higher risk of psychological and social problems, including drug and alcohol abuse, increased sexual promiscuity, and depression.¹³

This is particularly true for teens, as secret abortions create a psychological burden for adolescent girls and can hurt future relationships.¹⁴ Studies also find adolescent suicides one year after an abortion to be significantly higher than adolescent suicide after childbirth.¹⁵

Why should parents expect profit making abortion clinics to have their daughter's best interest at heart?

Parents can help their daughters counter pressures and make informed decisions.

No matter what her decision about her unborn child is, a teen's parents can provide their daughter with critical emotional and material support.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, one study found 89% of minors reported they were happier for having told their parents.¹⁷

Parents can empower adolescent mothers to make pro-life choices by helping raise the child so the minor can still attend school or pursue a career, by offering financial support to raise the child, or by helping their daughter understand and explore the adoption option.

Even if a decision is made to have an abortion, parents can help their children through the tough physical challenges and emotional issues that follow. At the clinic parents can help teens through medical crises by being an important resource about family medical history, which can help determine if certain abortion methods pose special risks for the teen mother.

While many women don't follow up their abortions with doctor visits that can spot deadly complications, teenagers are notorious for 'no-showing'.¹⁸ Involved, knowledgeable parents are able to take their daughters back to the doctor, and can watch for red flag warnings of depression, drug use, and excessive bleeding that can follow an abortion and signal more serious problems.

For full citations or additional info, please contact:



Case Study: Texas Teen Abortions

# of abortions per 1,000 in age group	Teen Abtn Rates 1998-99	TX Parental Notice Law Takes Effect	Teen Abtn Rates 2000-02
Age 15	6.5		5.4
Age 16	12.1		9.0
Age 17	18.7		14.5
Age 18	27.7		25.8
Age 19	31.5		30.1

data from New England Journal of Medicine, 3/9/06

Parental involvement laws are effective.

Even while the decline in national abortion rates showed signs of slowing, an extensive study of nearly 400,000 teen pregnancies in Texas showed a significant drop in both abortion and birth rates among minors once a parental notification law went into effect there in 2000.¹⁹ Other studies have shown that states adopting parental involvement laws see abortions drop more than those which don't.²⁰

Parental involvement laws are constitutional.

In 1976, the Supreme Court decided in *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth* that states could require the consent of one parent before a minor could have an abortion as long as the law contained a "judicial bypass." Conditions of the bypass were outlined in *Bellotti v. Baird (II)* in 1979, which said the teen could abort without parental consent if she demonstrated her maturity to a judge or if the judge decided an abortion would somehow be in her best interest.

Parental notification was first addressed in 1981 in *H.L. v. Matheson*, which permitted a Utah law requiring abortionists to notify the parents of minors still living at home as a dependent when an abortion is scheduled.

The Court has reaffirmed its decisions on parental involvement several times, most recently *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which in 1992 reaffirmed the "central holding" of *Roe*, but in a 7-2 vote explicitly allowed a requirement for one-parent consent with judicial bypass.²¹ This decision left parental involvement laws constitutional, provided they have the judicial bypass and exceptions for the life of the mother.

Even "pro-choice" Americans support parental involvement

Polling consistently shows widespread, popular support for laws requiring that parents be involved in an adolescent's decision to have an abortion. A recent poll showed 72% of the public supported parental consent, and 78% supported parental notification – including 64% of "pro-choice" respondents.²² Other polling shows support as high as 83%, and as of July 2005, according to PollingReport.com, no poll showed support below 70%²³

“Teens & Abortion: Why Parents Should Know”

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