



Access to Emergency Contraception at Title X Clinics

Title X, the sole federal program devoted exclusively to family planning, is a significant source of health care for thousands of Missouri women. Of the 349,030 Missouri women and teenage girls in need of subsidized contraceptive services, 76,010 were served by Title X in 2005.¹ That number increased by more than 11,000 to 87,160 people in 2006. This increase is likely linked to the removal of several thousand Missourians from state Medicaid rolls in 2005.

The women and teenagers served by Title X clinics – due to either their age, level of poverty, or ineligibility for other healthcare subsidies – are dependent upon these clinics for virtually all of their family-planning care, and are likely to have no other reliable source of healthcare. Because of the unique level of dependence on these providers, it is important to understand their capacity as a source of emergency contraception to their patients.

Pro-Choice Missouri Foundation comprehensively updated our 2006 survey of the state's Title X clinics. In an effort to discover the availability of EC through these clinics and whether that availability increased or decreased in the intervening year, the study was conducted using the same parameters as the 2006 survey. NARAL staff and interns repeatedly tried to contact all Missouri Title X providers. Attempts were made to contact each clinic at various times of the day and days of the week; even after numerous attempts, many clinics remained unreachable. Using the "mystery shopper" technique from the 2006 survey, the staff member asked each available clinic if they provided EC, and if not, where it could be obtained. The survey was conducted in November 2007. **The results of the research show that the accessibility of emergency contraception through Title X clinics has greatly decreased since last year's already unacceptable level.**

Of the 62 facilities contacted, only 24, or 38.71%, actually provided EC. That is down from 50.79% in 2006. In total, only 21 of Missouri's 114 counties have a Title X provider who dispenses EC. The reality that many of the state's Title X clinics are staffed by roving providers who may only be in a given facility one or two days a week complicates this statistic. It is possible that in several of the counties where a receptionist responded negatively to the caller's query, a

¹ Guttmacher Institute. "Contraception Counts." Mar 2006 1-2. 13 Dec 2007.



different answer may have been given had the call been received on a day when the Title X nurse happened to be there. The actual ability of a patient to access EC from clinics that do provide EC is impeded by the roving-provider and lack of specialized care-providers problems. Due to the narrow window of efficacy facing women in need of emergency contraception, Title X clinics are not a reliable source of that service.

Encouragingly, the number of facilities that refer callers to another potential source for EC has increased dramatically, from 57.69% to 80.56%. Anecdotal evidence does suggest, however, that a number of these referrals would be unhelpful to a person in need of EC. Our caller was often directed to clinics several counties away, or given a vague directive to “find a doctor” or “look in the phone book,” and was once referred to crisis pregnancy center – a source notorious for their refusal to provide contraception. This same anecdotal evidence suggests that the helpfulness of a facility to a woman seeking EC is greatly dependent upon who answers the phone. Because of the nature of the calls, the knowledge and personal moral leanings peculiar to the receptionist who happens to take the call may have a significant impact on the information provided. This indicates a specific need to educate all employees of these facilities who deal with patients about basic information about EC and its availability in the area.

- Only 21 of Missouri’s 114 counties have a Title X clinic which dispenses EC, down from 37 in 2006
- 58.06% of Title X clinics do not provide EC, down from 41.27% in 2006.
- Availability of EC from Title X providers is limited by traveling staff and limited clinic hours, especially in rural areas
- A large influx of patients to the Title X program highlights how very glaring these deficiencies are
- One of the few encouraging facts is that referrals to sources that can provide EC increased from 57.67% to 80.56% between 2006 and 2007