HOW DID WE EVALUATE THE EFFECTS OF PI LAWS?

We sought to evaluate the impact of PI policies and the judicial bypass process on minors seeking abortion services in three Southeastern states. RISE team members conducted one-on-one, in-person interviews with 34 people who worked at abortion facilities in three states. To include a wide range of perspectives, we interviewed personnel in a variety of roles, like scheduling, counseling, administrative reporting, and clinic management. We asked interviewees to describe processes for documenting parental consent or notification, patients’ and parents’ reactions to requirements, and any challenges faced in complying with legal and office requirements.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Our analysis indicates that PI laws may erode health services and quality in four domains: efficiency, patient-centeredness, timeliness, and equity. Despite the challenges PI laws present, clinic personnel deliver quality care and comply with state regulations.

Efficiency

Personnel described extensive documentation required to prove a parent’s relationship to a minor, and spending extra time preparing patients and parents over the phone to minimize delays due to missing documentation.

"[Our facility needs] at least the minor’s birth certificate and at least the parent or guardian’s ID... If the parent’s ID says Jones and they were Wilson on the birth certificate, we ask for marriage, adoption, or divorce decrees as to why the name’s changed to be sure that they’re the same person."

Patient-centeredness

Personnel recognized the need to tailor services according to the needs of patients. For patients interested in judicial bypass, this included explaining the process and preparing the minor for the hearing. In instances of unsupportive parents, respondents felt they had a duty to intervene to ensure the minor’s decision and needs remained the focus.

"If it’s a situation where she feels threatened... to tell her mom or dad that she’s pregnant, you know, definitely I let them know about the judicial bypass process. If it’s a situation where she’s just afraid... I kind of talk to her and let her know, ’it’s okay, maybe you can call back with mom on the phone, if you’re comfortable with that.’"
WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

Our data reveal that PI laws compromise high quality care for minors by creating inefficiencies in clinic operations, undermining patient preferences, unnecessarily delaying care, and exacerbating structural inequities. These effects partially stem from the existing PI statutes. Additionally, the broader over-regulation of abortion care has contributed to facilities developing protocols to require additional documentation and regulatory checks to ensure compliance with state audits. Removing these requirements would protect minors’ reproductive autonomy and support the provision of equitable, patient-centered reproductive healthcare.

Citation


The Center for Reproductive Health Research in the Southeast (RISE) is a research center housed at Emory University Rollins School of Public Health. Our mission is to improve reproductive health and equity of people in the U.S. Southeast through transdisciplinary research that informs social, systems, and policy change.