ABORTION CARE IN FLORIDA

- Pregnant people in Florida have limited access to abortion care. 73% of Florida counties in 2017 did not have an in-person abortion clinic.1
- Abortion is an essential, time sensitive health care service. Medically unnecessary restrictions push medication abortion care, which is a non-invasive abortion option that is approved by the FDA for use up to 10 weeks in pregnancy, out of reach for many.2
- Being denied care negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of pregnant people and their families. Women who were denied a wanted abortion had four times greater odds of living below the Federal Poverty Level and were more likely to experience poorer health outcomes for years after the pregnancy.2
- People seeking abortion already face significant barriers to receiving quality care. Restrictions on abortion care and insurance coverage disproportionately impact people working to make ends meet, immigrants, young people, and people of color.3
- Floridians support access to abortion care. More than 6 in 10 Floridian voters [64%] say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.4

TELEHEALTH: A TOOL FOR EXPANDING ACCESS TO MEDICATION ABORTION CARE IN FLORIDA

- Teleheath is a tool that can expand abortion access. Research shows that medication abortion care can safely and effectively be delivered through telehealth via a phone and/or video visit with a provider, reduces barriers to care, and can help patients access care earlier in pregnancy.5

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE, VISIT:

- Expanding Access to Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care
- Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Process Chart
- Equity in Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Checklist

POLICY IMPACTING PROVISION OF TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE IN FLORIDA

- The Florida Legislature has passed a passed Senate Bill 300, which created a six-week abortion ban as well as an explicit ban on telehealth for medication abortion and the mailing of medication abortion pills in 2023.6 The law will not take effect until the Florida Supreme Court issues a ruling in Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida, et al. v. State of Florida, et al.7
  o **Impact:** Pregnant people in Florida will have limited access to time-sensitive health care in their state and individuals will be forced to find alternatives or continue their pregnancies.
    - Abortion bans disproportionately affect the most marginalized communities, including but not limited to people of color,6 people struggling to make ends meet, people with disabilities,8 young people,9 and people in rural areas.10
- Florida has several in-person requirements that have the impact of severely limiting telehealth for medication abortion:8 Florida law requires patients to receive certain information, “orally, while physically present in the same room, and at least 24 hours before the procedure.”11 Florida law also requires patients undergo an ultrasound prior to an abortion. While there is a mandated in-person visit for abortion care and ultrasound, Florida does not ban telehealth usage. Providers may be able to satisfy any in-person requirements in one visit and use telehealth to meet any remaining requirements, followed by mail delivery of the medications so patients are not forced to visit the clinic twice.
  o **Impact:** These medically unnecessary restrictions force patients to visit a clinic for consultation and consent. In addition, waiting periods force patients to undergo a second medically unnecessary visit and delay a person’s ability to obtain abortion care.
    - There is no evidence that waiting periods improve medication abortion care’s safety.12

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2 Greene Foster, D. *The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a Thousand Women, and the Consequences of Having—or Being Denied—an Abortion,* June 2 2020.
9 Guttmacher Institute. *Research shows that medication abortion care can safely and effectively be delivered through telehealth via a phone and/or video visit with a provider, reduces barriers to care, and can help patients access care earlier in pregnancy.*
RESTRICTIONS THAT LIMIT COVERAGE OF TELEHEALTH FOR MEDICATION ABORTION CARE

In Florida, there is no coverage or payment parity for telehealth services: As background, coverage parity requires the same services be covered via telehealth as would be covered if delivered in-person. Payment parity requires the same payment rate or amount to be reimbursed via telehealth as would be if it had been delivered in-person.27

- There is no payment parity for telehealth: Medicaid and other payers in Florida are allowed by law to cover synchronous and asynchronous care, including audio-only services, but are not required to cover or reimburse providers at all or at the same rate if the same care could be delivered in-person.28
- Impact: These restrictions disproportionately impact people of color and those struggling to make ends meet.
- Impact: Providers may be less likely to offer patients access to telehealth services that cannot be reimbursed, forcing unnecessary in-person visits and inequitable access to care.

Lack of clarity regarding home as an eligible originating site: The permanent telehealth policies and statutes that govern both Medicaid and other payers do not have specific definitions or requirements for originating sites, and do not specify that a patient’s home is an eligible originating site.29

- Impact: This could result in confusion by claims adjusters, in insurance contracts, or denial of claims, ultimately harming providers and patients.

Florida’s Medicaid program is prohibited from covering most abortion services30, and there are no coverage protections for patients using private insurance: Many payers do not cover abortion services in Florida, including for telehealth. In fact, health plans offered in the state’s health exchange under the Affordable Care Act can only cover abortion in cases of life endangerment, rape, or incest31, unless individuals purchase an optional rider at an additional cost.32

- Impact: A lack of coverage can create insurmountable barriers for women already struggling to get affordable health care.33 Studies show that severe restrictions on Medicaid coverage or abortion forces one in four poor women seeking an abortion to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.34
This forces patients to pay out of pocket for abortion care. 40% of adult Americans reported not being able to cover an unexpected $400 expense, which is less than the cost of first trimester abortion care.35,36

MORE INFORMATION ON TELEHEALTH IN FLORIDA

- Southeastern Telehealth Resource Center
- Center for Connected Health Policy - Florida State Telehealth Laws

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