

YOUTH RIGHTS PENNSYLVANIA: YOUNG WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS/ABORTION

Who can a teen call to get counseling about whether to carry her pregnancy to term or have an abortion?

Most health care providers are able to provide or refer you for options counseling. Options counseling involves discussing topics like: carrying the child to term, abortion, and adoption. For more resources on options counseling call the CHOICE hotline at 215-985-3300 if you are in Philadelphia and 1-800-848-3367 outside of Philadelphia. You can also call your local health care center. You can find out where your local health care center is at: http://www.phila.gov/health/units/ahs/HealthCenter_map1.htm.

If a teenage girl does not want to carry her pregnancy to term, can she have an abortion without her parents' involvement?

In Pennsylvania, except in the case of a medical emergency, a physician must obtain the informed consent of at least one of the minor's parents or guardian before performing an abortion on a minor who is not judicially emancipated. If a parent refuses to consent or if the minor does not want to ask for her parents' consent, the minor can ask for a Judicial Bypass so that the court will give the minor permission to get an abortion. The petition is filed with the Court of Common Pleas of the judicial district in which she lives or where she is seeking an abortion. Through this process, the court can give the minor authorization to get an abortion.

What does the judge consider to decide whether a judicial bypass should be granted to a minor?

The court will give the doctor permission to give the minor an abortion if the court determines that the minor has given informed consent and is a mature minor, is emancipated, or that it would be in the minor's best interest. A youth can get help filing the petition for a judicial bypass by the court and can be appointed an attorney. If you need help finding an attorney to help you, call the Women's Law Project at 215-928-9801 or http://www.womenslawproject.org/brochures/wlp_teen_piece.pdf.

A court must rule on a petition for consent for an abortion no later than three days after receiving the application. A minor can appeal a decision made by the court and the court must rule on the appeal within five business days of its receipt. All court hearings are confidential.

Will Medical Assistance pay for an abortion?

In Pennsylvania, Medical Assistance does not cover abortions unless the pregnancy is life-threatening or is the result of rape or incest. The minor and her doctor will need to provide a statement that one of these conditions exists. You also need to provide proof that you have reported the rape to police unless your doctor signs a form that it is not in your best interest to report the rape.

Is assistance available to pay for abortions for teenagers who cannot afford it on their own?

If you need help paying for an abortion, call CHOICE at 1-800-848-3367. If you live in Philadelphia, you should also call the Women's Medical Fund at 215-564-6622. You can also call the National Abortion Federation Hotline at 1-800-772-9100.

Can a teen's parent force her to have an abortion?

No. Except in a medical emergency where the teenager's life is at risk, no parent or guardian may force a minor to have an abortion. If a teenage girl feels threatened that this may happen, she can go to the court for assistance.

Does the father of the child have any say in whether or not the baby's mother chooses an abortion?

No. The right to decide whether to have an abortion belongs to the pregnant woman. The father's consent is not required nor does he have a right to be notified.