

Health Advisory

Requirements Prior to Obtaining an Abortion in Pennsylvania August 29, 2022

SUMMARY POINTS

- After the Supreme Court decision on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, medical providers may see an increased demand for abortion, increased wait times to access abortion, and an increase in self-managed abortion.
- There are specific requirements to providing abortion in Pennsylvania.
- Much of the mandated workup can be completed by any physician prior to an appointment for an abortion; completion of these requirements will expedite time to abortion and improve workflow for abortion providers.
- All physicians can provide and document state-mandated counseling and collect state-mandated labs for patients who seek abortion, thus reducing the wait time to obtain abortion care.

There are two types of abortions: procedural and medication. A procedural abortion involves removing the contents of the uterus with gentle suction. A medication abortion (or medical abortion) is accomplished by using medications to end a pregnancy. Medication abortion has become the most common form of abortion for those eligible based on gestational age (up to 11 weeks)^{1,2}. In clinical practice, medication abortion is about 95 percent to 98 percent effective, causing a woman to completely pass the pregnancy without needing a procedure. In comparison, early procedural abortion is effective 98 percent of the time.

Abortion restrictions in Pennsylvania:

In Pennsylvania, several restrictions are in place surrounding abortion care³:

- Patients must receive state-directed counseling about abortion.
- The patient must wait 24 hours between being counseled about abortion and being able to receive one.
- Medicaid and plans purchased through the Affordable Care Act on the state's insurance exchange marketplace do not cover the cost of abortion (except for cases of pregnant person's life endangerment, rape, or incest).
- A minor must have parental consent before an abortion can be obtained or obtain judicial bypass.
- An abortion cannot be performed for sex selection.
- Clinics are subject to regulation surrounding their design, layout, and staffing and only physicians are permitted to prescribe mifepristone.

If a patient presents to you requesting an abortion, you can facilitate access to this legal service by doing the following:

1. Inform the patient about the types of abortion options (medication and aspiration) and that the abortion provider will discuss these options in detail.
2. Estimate gestational age. This can be accomplished by:
 - Noting time since patient's last menstrual period (LMP), which must be \leq days if the patient desires a medication abortion.
 - Advise the patient they will require an ultrasound to confirm gestational age if they do not have a reliable LMP. Often, the ultrasound can be done at the appointment for abortion.
3. Perform and document [state mandated counseling](#) was completed at least 24 hours prior to initiation of abortion procedure⁴:

To expedite abortion access, the referring physician must orally inform the patient of:

- The nature of the proposed procedure or treatment of those and alternatives to the procedure or treatment
- The probable gestational age at the time the abortion is performed
- The medical risks associated with carrying pregnancy to term
- Offer to review or provide a copy of [state printed materials](#) which list agencies that provide alternatives to abortion. Note: The provider responsibility is only to offer these materials; however, many patients may not want to see them and can decline this step⁵.
- Inform the patient that medical assistance is available for prenatal care, childbirth, and neonatal care.
- The father is liable to assist in child support.

4. You may sign the MA-3 form, if applicable.
 - Medicaid will pay for an abortion in the case of rape, incest, and life endangerment. If this is applicable to the patient, the [MA-3 form](#) needs to be completed⁶.
5. Draw PA-mandated bloodwork and enter into the patient's medical record or provide a copy to the patient:
 - Hemoglobin or hematocrit
 - Blood group and RH type
 - Urine protein and sugar
6. Refer to an abortion provider, giving the patient a copy of their proof of counseling and their labs or the link to the lab where the results will be available. Below is a list of providers in Philadelphia:

Name	Address	Contact Information
Mazzoni Center	1348 Bainbridge Street Philadelphia, PA 19147	(215) 563-0652
Planned Parenthood – Locust (Elizabeth Blackwell)	1144 Locust Street, Lower Level Philadelphia, PA 19107	(215) 351-5550
Philadelphia Women's Center	777 Apple Tree Street Philadelphia, PA 19107	(215) 574-2590 or 1-800-869-2330
The Peace Center	3737 Market Street Philadelphia, PA 19104	(215) 615-5234
Planned Parenthood Surgical – Far Northeast	2751 Comly Road Philadelphia, PA 19154	(215) 464-2225
Einstein Medical Center Philadelphia – Paley Family Planning	5501 Old York Road, Paley 3 Philadelphia, PA 19141	(215) 456-7180
Jefferson Health Family Planning Services	833 Chestnut Street Philadelphia, PA 19107	(215) 298-4378

References:

1. Medication Abortion | Guttmacher Institute. Accessed May 1, 2022. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/medication-abortion>.
2. Unintended Pregnancy | Unintended Pregnancy | Reproductive Health | CDC. Accessed April 26, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/unintendedpregnancy/index.htm>.
3. State Facts About Abortion: Pennsylvania | Guttmacher Institute. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-pennsylvania>.
4. Section 3205 – Informed consent, 18 Pa. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://casetext.com/statute/pennsylvania-statutes/consolidated-statutes/title-18-pacs-crimes-and-offenses/part-ii-definition-of-specific-offenses/article-b-offenses-involving-danger-to-the-person/chapter-32-abortion/section-3205-informed-consent>.
5. Section 3208 – Printed Information | 2010 Pennsylvania Abortion code. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://law.justia.com/codes/pennsylvania/2010/title-18/chapter-32/3208/>.
6. PA MA-3 Form. Accessed August 5, 2022. <https://law.justia.com/codes/pennsylvania/2010/title-18/chapter-32/3208/>.