



HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL BEING: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

“The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives.” _Justice Sandra Day O’Connor¹

WHY: Only when acknowledged as full and autonomous citizens with equal protection under the law, including the right to privacy in medical decisions and with access to full reproductive health care, will women enjoy full participation in the economic, civic and social realms of our society.

- Reproductive health care –including breast exams, cervical cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), family planning services—lies at the core of an integrated approach to women’s health care.
- Contraception is an essential component of preventive health care for all women of reproductive age, contributes to improved children’s health when pregnancies are planned and decreases the likelihood of need for state assistance.
- Lack of contraceptive coverage by private health insurance contributes to high rates of unintended pregnancy in Wisconsin: 39% of all pregnancies in Wisconsin are unintended²; 73% of all births paid for by Medicaid are unintended.³
- Annual employer expenses associated with unintended pregnancies include maternity leave, family medical leave, days to care for a newborn, health costs in pregnancy-related sick leave and premature births, premium increases, absenteeism and higher employee turnover.
- In 2000, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled that failure to cover contraceptive prescriptions in employer-based prescription drug policies is a violation of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. The 2004 formal opinion by Wisconsin’s Attorney General, Peg Lautenschlager, underlines the risk of legal action faced by many state employers.
- Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent an unintended pregnancy for women who have under-protected or unprotected sex, or who are victims of sexual assault. It is a form of hormonal contraception with only minor side effects that will not affect an already established pregnancy.

WHAT: Increase access to reproductive health care, and especially contraception, for women statewide.

- Wisconsin’s Medicaid Family Planning Waiver: implemented in 2003 to provide greater access to reproductive health for women ages 15-44 who are within 185% of the federal poverty level – i.e. low-income women without insurance benefits who are not eligible for other programs like

¹ Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 1992.

² Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010 Implementation Plan “High-Risk Sexual Behavior: objective 2 Unintended Pregnancy”* pg. 1. Online at

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/statehealthplan/implementation/pdf-files/HighRisk-Obj-2.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*, pg. 6.

Health, Safety and Well Being: Reproductive Health

BadgerCare. Services provided at no cost include pelvic exams and pap smears, contraceptive supplies and diagnosis and treatment for STIs.

- **Worksite Reproductive Care:** The state’s family planning providers are able to offer comprehensive reproductive health services, including health promotion programs and employee education, more cost-effectively than traditional health plans. Through the Worksite Reproductive Care Program (WoRC), employers contract with the Wisconsin Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (WFPRHA) for high-quality, low-cost services for insured employees; uninsured employees may benefit from subsidized programs the providers offer, including the Waiver.
- **Emergency Contraception:** WFPRHA, in conjunction with Family Planning Health Services, Inc. (FPHS), created a toll-free hotline (**1-877-975-9858**) to ensure that women in every part of the state would have immediate information about access to EC. They have also instituted EZ-EC agreements with community-based organizations that help victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

HOW:

- ✓ **Become active in legislative advocacy** to protect women’s reproductive rights and full access to reproductive health care, ***including legal contraceptives dispensed through health care centers and pharmacies***. Our partner: Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (www.PPWI.org, click on “Take Action.”)
- ✓ Enroll yourself and/or other eligible women in the Medicaid Family Planning Waiver. Forms are online at www.fphs.org/forms.php. Women who meet the description are presumed eligible and able to receive contraception immediately.
- ✓ Ask university and college health centers to enroll students in the program, and to widely promote the service. Initial enrollment of large groups can be facilitated by borrowing an ACCeSS Kiosk _ works just like an ATM— from FPHS (1-800-246-5743).
- ✓ Start at your own workplace. Determine if your insurance plan covers reproductive health care and contraception. Find out if non-profit family planning providers are on the employer’s list of service providers. If not, invite other employees to join you in encouraging your employer to consider reproductive health care as a central part of a wellness program. And contact WFPRHA to set up a meeting to enroll your company for the WoRC Program tailored just for it.
- ✓ Regional Solutions Networks (RSNs) may, alone or in partnership with local organizations, invite WFPRHA to speak to members of the local business community about the WoRC Program and cost savings available to them.
- ✓ Develop an EC campaign in your community. Engage university campuses and technical colleges, as well as other organizations that reach out to women, in the campaign. Promote the hotline (**877-975-9858**) and getting EC in your medicine cabinet before you need it. Build a list of physicians and pharmacies that provide EC where you live and make it available widely. Find out how to join WFPRHA’s EC Campaign (800-246-5743).

RESOURCES:

- Questions for WFPRHA and FPHS can be answered by phone at 1-800-246-5743 or 1-715-675-9858, online at www.fphs.org, by email at newmanl@fphs.org, or by mail at 719 N. 3rd St., Wausau, WI 54401.
- Questions on legislative issues may be answered by Lisa Boyce or Chris Taylor at Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin by phone at 1-608-256-7549, ext. 224/225; online at www.PPWI.org, by email at Chris.Taylor@ppwi.org, or by mail at 111 King Street, Madison, WI 53703.