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## **Policy Statement on Parental Consent and Notification for Abortion**

Physicians for Reproductive Health and Choice supports confidential healthcare for minors. A number of leading national medical groups focusing on adolescent health, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, and the National Medical Association, also support this concept.

Almost two-thirds of pregnant minors voluntarily involve at least one parent when choosing abortion. Those who do not voluntarily involve a parent do so for good reason, including fear of abuse or abandonment. While parental notification and consent laws are offered by proponents as a means to increase family communication, research has repeatedly demonstrated that these laws fail to achieve this goal. In states with consent or notification laws, minors voluntarily consult their parents about their intent to have an abortion at the same rates as they do in states without such laws.

Adolescents are competent decision makers about their reproductive health. They are able to grasp both the risks and benefits of different pregnancy options, and are able to make voluntary, rational, and independent decisions.

When a minor is pregnant, timing is a critical factor. Parental consent and notification laws cause delay in treatment without any compensatory benefits. In most cases it is preferable to have the parent or guardian of every minor involved in this decision; however, such family involvement cannot be mandated because not all families provide support for adolescents' decisions. As a society, we must protect the rights of all minors. Mandated parental notification and consent laws are harmful to the health of adolescents, as they result in delay and restricted access to timely medical care. Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health opposes parental consent and notification laws.