

March 7, 2019: Advocacy spotlight on AMA and other health groups strongly object to Title X Family Planning Rule

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Last year, the AMA filed comments (PDF) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to express strong concerns about proposed regulatory changes to the federal family planning program, Title X. On Feb. 22, the Trump administration issued the final rule (PDF).

Of significant concern to the AMA, the final federal regulations, if allowed to go into effect, would limit women's access to health care and force physicians to withhold information from patients about all of their health care options. Specifically, federally-funded family planning clinics will no longer be required to give patients access to non-directive counseling on all their options; physicians are permitted to provide non-directive counseling, but are not required to do so. The rule also requires that Title X providers refer all pregnant patients for prenatal care, and prohibits such providers from referring a patient for abortion as a method of family planning; pregnant patients may only be given a list of primary care providers for prenatal care, some of whom may also provide abortion services but may not be identified as such. Moreover, these clinics will have to be organized so that they maintain physical and financial separation between services funded by the government and any organization that provides abortions or referrals for abortions.

The Title X program provides contraceptives, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and other primary health care services to four million patients each year, many of whom are low-income or uninsured. Planned Parenthood serves about 40 percent of this caseload. In effect, the final regulation will make many currently funded Title X clinics, primarily Planned Parenthood clinics, ineligible for funding, thereby reducing patient access to comprehensive family planning and women's health services. It will also effectively restrict open and direct conversations between physicians and patients about their health care options. Because the final rule includes significant restrictions on physician speech, the AMA has filed a lawsuit in federal court in Oregon along with the Oregon Medical Association and Planned Parenthood.

Read more details in a story by AMA President Barbara A. McAneny, MD.

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