

May 31, 2018: Advocacy spotlight on AMA fights to preserve the sanctity of the patient-physician relationship

AMA fights to preserve the sanctity of the patient-physician relationship

In response to the administration's plan to withhold federal family planning funding from Planned Parenthood and other entities AMA has issued a statement strongly objecting to the policy change, asserting that it interferes with patient-physician relationships and negatively affects quality of care.

"High-quality medical care relies on honest, unfiltered conversations between patients and their physicians," said AMA President David Barbe in a statement released last week. "Gag orders that restrict the ability of physicians to explain all options to their patients and refer them—whatever their health care needs—compromise this relationship and force physicians and nurses to withhold information that their patients need to make decisions about their care."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announcement specifically notes that the regulation update "would prohibit referral for abortion as a method of family planning."

The new proposal would also endanger access to care that the Title X program has helped to facilitate. Title X has helped to expand access to basic reproductive health care like birth control, cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, and exams. The program serves roughly 4 million people every year, many of whom would otherwise be unable to access care.

"Title X is popular, successful, and has had bipartisan support for decades," said Barbe. "We are at a 30-year low for unintended pregnancy and a historic low for pregnancy among teenagers — largely because of expanded access to birth control. We should not be walking that progress back."

The AMA's stance on this issue is in keeping with its longstanding position on maintaining patient choice and physician freedom to practice in the setting they choose, and reflects a broader commitment to protecting free communication between patients and physicians.

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