

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT LAWS AND THEIR EFFECT ON ABORTION-MINDED MINORS

Robert Schwarzwald

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), since 1990, the number of abortions has decreased by about 20%.¹ The lack of uncertainty behind this decline inspired a study and comparison of the effect of state parental involvement (PI) laws.

Michael New's 2008 Family Research Council study found that PI laws within the various states have had a positive effect in reducing the amount of abortions among minors. This study examines abortion rates among minors in the years 1985-1999, and is the first of its kind to compare different types of PI laws.

After Roe v. Wade

In the subsequent cases of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court permitted the states to establish laws that required minors to gain either parental notification or parental consent in order to have abortions. However, the Supreme Court also maintained that the PI laws must have a judicial bypass in order to be viable.

Incidentally, state development in parental notification laws has been somewhat slow. Despite the slow progress, 36 states had adopted PI laws by the year 2008², and those that have adopted PI laws have had positive results.

Results

Due to parental notification laws, the overall abortion rate among minors, between the years 1985-1999, has fallen by almost 50%. That is, the abortion rate for every thousand girls between the ages of 13 and 17 fell from 13.5% in 1985, to 6.5% by 1999.³

Furthermore, it was determined that upon a state's enactment of a parental notification law, the overall abortion rate fell by 13.6%.⁴

Meanwhile, the requirement of parental notification, instead of parental consent, causes a 19% decrease in the abortion rate.⁵

Also, laws that require both parents' involvement reduces the in-state abortion rate of minors by about 31%.⁶



FAMILY RESEARCH
COUNCIL
801 G STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC
20001

(202) 393-2100

ORDER LINE:
1-800-225-4008

WWW.FRC.ORG

Other Research

While there has not yet been a study that examines PI laws overall, there have been other studies that have focused on individual PI laws.

A study by Ellertson (1997) that separately analyzed PI laws of Indiana, Minnesota, and Missouri found that the minor abortion rate declined anywhere from 17-26% after enactment. However, those minors then traveled to nearby states for abortions.⁷ Also, after passage of Minnesota's first parental notification law in 1981, in-state abortions decreased by approximately 28%.⁸

Overall, the aforementioned and other studies have found that PI laws, at the state level, have reduced the minor abortion rate within the state's boundaries.

Conclusion

On the whole, what this study reveals is that laws that require parental consent cause a greater decline in the minor abortion rate than does parental notification.

Additionally, laws requiring involvement of both parents reduced the minor abortion rate even further.

The statistical significance of each finding implies that state and federal legislation that mandates parental involvement in abortions for minors causes an overall decline in the abortion rate among minors. Such legislation ought to be encouraged given its positive results.

NOTES

¹ This figure was calculated by the author for the 47 states reporting data in both 1990 and 2004 on the number of abortions performed.

² *Who Decides? 2008* (Washington, D.C.: NARAL Foundation, 2008).

³ This figure was calculated for the 33 states reporting data in both 1985 and 1999 on the number of abortions performed on minors.

⁴ Calculation by author based on data reported in the article.

⁵ Calculation by author based on data reported in the article.

⁶ Calculation by author based on data reported in the article.

⁷ Charlotte Ellertson, "Mandatory Parental Involvement in Minors' Abortions: Effects of the Laws in Minnesota, Missouri, and Indiana," *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 87, No. 8 (August 1997), pp. 1367-1374.

⁸ James Rogers, Robert Boruch, George Storms, and Dorothy DeMoya, "Impact of the Minnesota Parental Notification Law on Abortion and Birth," *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (1991), pp. 294-298.