

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ABORTION ACCESS

IN COLORADO

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PHOTO BY IAN HUTCHINSON ON UNSPLASH

In the 1973 landmark case, *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that all persons have a constitutional right to choose abortion. Although several Supreme Court decisions have fine-tuned *Roe* in the interim, the right to choose abortion remains the law of the land.

However, depending on where you reside, actual access to abortion care varies greatly. Some states have enacted laws that target and burden abortion providers, forcing many clinics to close their doors. Others have enacted bans on particular types of safe abortion procedures, or imposed arbitrary gestational cut-off dates after which one cannot legally have an abortion. These restrictions on access make abortion out of reach for many pregnant people, especially those of limited means, pregnant BIPOC, and pregnant people who live in rural or mountain areas. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some states have expanded abortion access by requiring state public and private insurers to cover the cost of abortion care. Colorado falls somewhere in the middle of these two ends of the spectrum.

Thanks to voters, abortion rights advocates, and progressive lawmakers, Colorado does not have some of the most common abortion restrictions seen in other states. We do NOT have mandatory waiting periods or ultrasound requirements, arbitrary gestational limits, or restrictions on what types of safe abortion procedures medical providers can offer patients. Colorado does, however, have two abortion restrictions that prevent many from accessing abortion care. State law requires youth under the age of 18 to notify a parent before they have an abortion — with some exceptions. Colorado's state constitution prohibits the use of state funds for abortion care. This means that those who get their health insurance through a state or local government employer, those who receive state Medicaid coverage, and those who are detained in a state correctional facility, cannot rely on their health insurance to cover any portion of the cost of abortion care. They must pay for the entire cost of care themselves.

Despite these obstacles to abortion access, a majority of Coloradans believe that everyone should have access to the full range of reproductive healthcare — including abortion — and the freedom to make their own healthcare decisions free from political interference. Time and time again, voters continue to reject abortion bans at the ballot, underscoring that reproductive freedom and abortion access are Colorado values.

YOU HAVE A
CONSTITUTIONALLY
PROTECTED RIGHT
TO CHOOSE
ABORTION.

PHOTO BY VIC ON UNSPLASH

Is abortion legal in Colorado?

Yes. You have a constitutionally protected right to choose abortion.

How far into pregnancy can I have an abortion?

Personal medical decisions are best made by a pregnant person in consultation with their medical provider and trusted loved ones. For this reason, Colorado does not impose arbitrary gestational limits on when someone can access abortion care. However, not all abortion providers offer abortion later in pregnancy. If your medical provider doesn't offer later abortion care, ask them to connect you with a medical provider who does.

If I am under 18, do I need my parents' permission to have an abortion?

No. Colorado does not require parental consent.

Ok, but do I need to at least tell them?

Yes, minors must notify a parent before they can have an abortion. There are exceptions to this notification rule, and you should discuss them with your medical provider. You also have the option of asking a judge to let you have an abortion without notifying your parent. Abortion providers can connect you with a lawyer to help.



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Do I have to get my partner's consent?

No, there are no partner consent requirements in Colorado. You are the only person who must consent to your own abortion care.

If I decide to have an abortion, will I be harassed by protesters?

Colorado has a "bubble law" that prohibits a protester from coming within eight feet of you when within 100 feet of a health care facility. It is illegal for a protestor to stop you from entering or exiting the facility. Many abortion providers have volunteer escorts on duty who will walk and talk with you if you feel intimidated by protestors. Ask your abortion provider about the availability of an escort before your appointment.

What are my options for an abortion procedure?

There are two types of abortion care: medication abortion and surgical abortion. Medication abortion — or the abortion pill — consists of using two different medicines called mifepristone and misoprostol to end a pregnancy. The medicine causes cramping and bleeding to empty your uterus (kind of like a very heavy period). Medication abortion is usually only available during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. If you are further along, or do not want a medication abortion, you can instead have an in-clinic abortion. In-clinic abortion — also called surgical abortion — is a medical procedure performed by a medical provider in a clinical setting. It works by using suction to empty your uterus. Your abortion provider will answer any questions you have about abortion procedures. You can also visit plannedparenthood.org for more information.

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Is abortion safe?

Yes, abortion is an extremely safe and common procedure. At current rates, about one in three American pregnant people will have had an abortion by the age of 45. Major complications occur less than one quarter of one percent of the time, about the same frequency as complications from colonoscopies. Conclusive scientific research shows that abortion does NOT increase risk for breast cancer, infertility, or mental health issues.

How much does an abortion cost?

The cost of an abortion varies depending on several factors including how far along you are in your pregnancy and which abortion provider and method you choose. The cost of a medication abortion is usually between \$350 and \$500. The cost of surgical abortion varies depending on how far along in pregnancy a patient is, usually starting around \$800 and going up to several thousand dollars later in pregnancy. If you have sticker shock - do not worry! Read on to learn about resources available to cover the cost if you cannot pay.

Is abortion covered by my private insurance?

Private insurance companies are not required to cover abortions in Colorado but many plans do. Check with your insurance provider.

Is abortion covered under Medicaid?

Under Colorado state and federal law, Medicaid and Health First



Colorado can only cover abortion if necessary to preserve the pregnant person's life, in cases of rape or incest, or in cases of certain fetal diagnoses.

What are my options if I can't pay for my abortion?

Many resources exist to help pay for an abortion. Contact The Pregnant people's Freedom Fund at support@pregnantpeoplesfreedomfund.org, Planned Parenthood at 1-800-230-PLAN or the National Abortion Federation at 1-800-772-9100 to explore resources to help pay for abortions.

I get my insurance through my government employer. Is abortion covered under my insurance?

Probably not. Colorado's state constitution prohibits the use of public funds for abortion. Public employees' insurance policies only cover the cost of abortion when abortion is necessary to save the life of the pregnant person.

My friend said I can order the abortion pill online and don't need to see a medical provider. Is this safe?

You should always speak with a medical provider to make sure it is safe for you to take the abortion pill and to be sure you are receiving the correct medication. Contact Planned Parenthood or the National Abortion Federation to find an abortion provider to talk to. Medication obtained on the internet might not work and could be harmful to your health. Please contact Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains or the National Abortion Federation to find a professional abortion provider.

My friend went to a place that pressured her to continue her pregnancy and put the baby up for adoption, rather than get an abortion. Is this common at abortion providers?

No. A medically trained professional will provide you with all the information you need to make your decision, *not* pressure your decision.

Your friend likely went to a fake health clinic known as a crisis pregnancy center. These fake clinics are staffed by anti-abortion activists, not medical professionals. Don't be fooled if they are wearing medical scrubs — this is a deceptive tactic used at some fake clinics. They may offer free pregnancy tests or ultrasounds, but will never offer abortion services or abortion referrals. Fake clinic staff are trained to convince pregnant people to not choose abortion, and tell pregnant people lies about abortion to coerce their decision. Fake clinics do not provide pregnant people with the unbiased, medically accurate information they need and deserve. To find a real clinic that will provide you with the information and support you need to make this decision, visit the National Abortion Federation or Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains.

Do I have to notify my parents if I want birth control?

No, unlike abortion services, family planning services (birth control) are completely confidential for everyone including those under the age of 18. Emergency contraception is available at most pharmacies without a prescription. The medication is available to anyone over the age of 16 with no identification required.

Does my school require a comprehensive sex education curriculum?

Colorado does not require schools to provide sex education. However, if a school district chooses to provide sex education, then it is



required to fulfill the comprehensive content requirements of Colorado HB19-1032. To learn how to get comprehensive sex ed in your school please visit: realsexco.org.

Am I able to receive a 12-month prescription for birth control?

Yes. As of 2017, Colorado HB17-1186 allows Colorado pregnant people to receive a year's supply of birth control.

RESOURCES

THE COBALT ABORTION FUND
cobaltaf.org

PLANNED PARENTHOOD
1-800-230-PLAN (7526) | plannedparenthood.org

NATIONAL ABORTION FEDERATION
naf@prochoice.org | 1-800-772-9100 | prochoice.org



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