

Abortion— a woman's decision, a woman's right

What is the Abortion Counseling Service?

We are women whose ultimate goal is the liberation of women in society. One important way we are working toward that goal is by helping any woman who wants an abortion to get one as safely and cheaply as possible under existing conditions.

Abortion is a safe, simple, relatively painless operation when performed by a trained person in clean conditions. In fact, it's less complicated than a tonsillectomy. People hear about its horrors because desperate women turn to incompetent people or resort to unsafe methods. Much of our time is spent finding reliable and sympathetic doctors who will perform safe abortions for as little money as possible. You will receive the best medical care we know of.

Although abortions are illegal in Illinois, the state has not brought charges against any woman who has had an abortion. Only those who perform abortions have been prosecuted.

Any information you give your counselor is kept confidential. She will not give your name to anyone or discuss anything you tell her without your permission. It is vitally important that you are completely honest about your medical history with your counselor and the doctor.

Loan fund

Because abortions are illegal and in such demand, they are exorbitantly expensive. In fact, an abortion frequently costs as much as the combined doctor and hospital bills for having a baby. The ACS believes that no woman should be denied an abortion because she is unable to pay for it. We have a small and constantly depleted non-interest loan fund for women who would otherwise be unable to have an abortion. It is non-profit and non-discriminatory. Twenty-five dollars of what you pay for an abortion goes toward maintaining this service. If you receive

money from this fund, please repay it as promptly as you can so that the money may be used to help other women. An unpaid loan may mean that we cannot lend money to someone else who needs it desperately.

About the operation

BEFOREHAND. Confirm your pregnancy by a pregnancy test at a medical laboratory. Try to figure out as accurately as possible how many weeks pregnant you are. If you have any special physical condition (like allergies or heart trouble) which would call for special precautions, tell your counselor and the doctor about it before the operation.

When you keep your appointment with the doctor you should take with you a sanitary napkin and belt — not a tampon or tampon. You may want a friend or relative to go along to go home with you. Notify us beforehand that someone will be with you. The day of the abortion, eat lightly and stay away from heavily spiced foods.

THE OPERATION ITSELF: An abortion is simple and takes only a few minutes. You'll probably be given a local anesthetic. The injections are relatively painless. After the anesthetic has taken effect, the neck of the uterus is opened and the lining of the uterus is scraped out with a loop-shaped instrument called a curette. The operation is called a dilation and curettage, or a D & C.

After the operation is over the doctor may give you a shot or pills to prevent infection and bleeding. Lie down and rest for half-an-hour or till you feel normal. Before you leave, the doctor may give you antibiotics or other pills and will explain their function and use. One of the pills may be ergotrate to help the uterus contract and prevent excessive bleeding. Feel free to ask the doctor or us any question you may have.

AFTERWARD: If the doctor asks you to check back, it is very important that you do so as instructed. Also call us so we know how you are feeling and whether you are perfectly satisfied with the doctor we sent you to. You should be examined by a gynecologist within a few week after your abortion. If you like, we can recommend a gynecologist for the post-operative examination.

You may bleed or cramp mildly for a few days or feel other slight effects for a few weeks. On the other hand, you may have no after-effects except slight bleeding. Physical response varies

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from woman to woman. If you bleed for longer than three weeks or pass big blood clots, call us or go to a gynecologist. Again, if you have questions or need reassurance, please call us. Don't engage in strenuous exercise or take tub baths for about ten days, and make sure you move your bowels regularly. Hold off on intercourse for at least ten days to a month, or till you're fully healed.

You may have some emotional "blues" after your abortion. Partly this is because of the way we're brought up, partly it is because of hormonal changes in your body. If you want to talk this over with someone, call us.

If you have not been using any contraceptive and would like to start now (it beats an abortion), ask the gynecologist about it when you go in for your check-up. Women who have been using birth control pills should not start taking them again until after their first *normal* period has started. The pills are frequently not fool-proof during the first month of their use. A diaphragm may no longer fit you after you have had an abortion. If you use one, you should be remeasured by a gynecologist to see if you need a new size.

Abortion as a social problem

We are giving our time not only because we want to make abortions safer, cheaper and more accessible for the individual women who come to us, but because we see the whole abortion issue as a problem of society. The current abortion laws are a symbol of the sometimes subtle, but often blatant, oppression of women in our society.

Women should have the right to control their own bodies and lives. Only a woman who is pregnant can determine whether she has enough resources — economic, physical and emotional — at a given time to bear and rear a child. Yet at present the decision to bear the child or have an abortion is taken out of her hands by governmental bodies which can have only the slightest notion of the problems involved.

Cultural, moral and religious feelings are largely against abortion, and society does all it can to make a woman feel guilty and degraded if she has one.

The same society that denies a woman the decision not to have a child refuses to provide humane alternatives for women who do have children, such as child care facilities to permit the mother to work, or role flexibility so that men can share in the raising of children.

The same society that insists that women should and do find their basic fulfillment in motherhood will condemn the unwed mother and her fatherless child.

The same society that glamorizes women as sex objects and teaches them from early childhood to please and satisfy men views pregnancy and childbirth as punishment for "immoral" or "careless" sexual activity, especially if the woman is uneducated, poor or black. The same morality that says "that's what she gets for fooling around" also fails to recognize society's responsibility to the often unwelcome child that results. Punitive welfare laws reflect this view, and churches reinforce it.

Our society's version of equal opportunity means that lower-class women bear unwanted children or face expensive, illegal and often unsafe abortions, while well-connected middle-class women can frequently get safe and hush-hush "D and Cs" in hospitals.

Only women can bring about their own liberation. It is time for women to get together to change the male-made laws and to aid their sisters caught in the bind of legal restrictions and social stigma. Women must fight together to change the attitudes of society about abortion and to make the state provide free abortions as a human right.

There are currently many unrelated groups lobbying for population control, legal abortion and selective sterilization. Some are actually attempting to control some populations, prevent some births — for instance those of black people or poor people. We are opposed to these or any form of genocide. We are for every woman having exactly as many children as she wants, when she wants, if she wants.

It's time the Bill of Rights applied to women. It's time women got together and started really fighting for their rights. Governments have to be made to realize that abortions are part of the health care they must provide for the people who support them.

If you are interested in giving your energy and time to help bring about a better life for yourself and your daughters and sons, get in touch with Jane, 643-3844.

If you would like to know more about the Women's Liberation Movement, write to WLM, 5406 S. Dorchester, Chicago, 60615.

For more information on abortion and the counseling service, call Jane, 643-3844, or write to Jane, C/O Women's Liberation, at the above address.