THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS MUST BE A WAKE-UP CALL TO DEMAND REPRODUCTIVE SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL

The coronavirus crisis puts our public healthcare priorities — and our healthcare system’s failures — in stark relief, especially when it comes to reproductive health. As anti-abortion politicians exploit this crisis to advance their own dangerous agendas, we have to do more than just defend lost ground. Now is the time for us to move in unison with the spirit of compassion and demand lasting changes to improve access to abortion, expand the social safety net, and ensure that every one of us has the freedom to decide if, when, and how to create, sustain, and define our families.

These policy recommendations are rooted in If/When/How’s five strategic initiatives, which are focused on improving abortion access — especially for young people, public program participants, and those who self-manage their abortions — as well as enhancing dignity, resources, and rights for birthing people and parents. We call on state, local, and national leaders to begin working immediately to implement changes that will ensure our communities not only survive this crisis, but continue to thrive in the years to come.

OUR DEMANDS

Self-managed and supported non-clinical abortion decriminalized and recognized as part of how people access abortion care.

- As travel to clinics becomes more difficult, people will inevitably seek self-managed solutions to end pregnancies. State governments should immediately halt any attempt to investigate or punish people believed to have ended a pregnancy, and assure people that they can seek health care after an abortion, miscarriage, or stillbirth without fear of arrest.
- As abortion care providers work to limit their patients’ exposure to COVID-19, lawmakers should remove unnecessary restrictions that prevent them from providing access by mail to abortion medications.

- Act now:
  - Sign our petition to help us decriminalize self-managed abortion: **repeal** criminal laws targeting people who self-manage abortion, **reform** laws to prevent misuse by prosecutors, and **reinforce** existing protections for abortion rights to include freedom from criminalization.
  - Lawyers: **sign on** to our letter against the criminalization of self-managed abortion.
  - Lawyers and graduating law students: join the **RJ Lawyers Network**, and use your legal knowledge to shield and defend people criminalized for ending their own pregnancies or helping others do so.

- **Share on social:**
  - Share **ReproLegalHelpline.org**, our confidential legal helpline and website where people can get free information, support, and attorney referrals, with your social networks.
  - Share the petition to decriminalize self-managed abortion with your social networks.
Learn more:
  o **Media Alert:** Self-Managed Abortion, the Law, and COVID-19
  o **Fact Sheet:** Self-Managed Abortion
  o **Roe’s Unfinished Promise: Decriminalizing Abortion Once and for All** report (and the May 2019 update) provides a comprehensive look at the criminalization of abortion in the United States

**Forced parental involvement** laws suspended (and repealed permanently); judicial bypass made more accessible to ensure young people have swift, confidential access to abortion care.

  • States should immediately suspend forced parental involvement laws, because these provisions deny young people timely care.
  • At a minimum, states should equip courts to conduct confidential virtual judicial bypass hearings or forego the hearings and grant default judicial waivers.

**Act now:**
  o Lawyers: [sign on](https://example.com) to our letter demanding an end to court intervention and forced parental involvement in young people’s reproductive decisions.
  o Access If/When/How’s [Judicial Bypass Wiki](https://example.com), which we are releasing early with select content for advocates supporting young people navigating judicial bypass during the COVID-19 crisis. [Contact us](https://example.com) if you have new or additional information to offer about youth access to abortion in your state.
  o Lawyers and graduating law students: join the [RJ Lawyers Network](https://example.com) to learn more about how to support young people navigating the judicial bypass process.

**Share on social:**
  o Share the [Judicial Bypass Wiki](https://example.com) to equip advocates supporting young people accessing abortion.
  o Share If/When/How’s [lawyer sign-on](https://example.com) letter demanding the removal of barriers to young people’s abortion access with your social networks.

**Learn more:**
  o **Fact Sheet:** Youth Access to Abortion
  o **Debunking Judicial Myths about Judicial Bypass and Abortion Access for Young People** unpacks the common misconceptions around youth access to abortion care and breaks down how parental involvement laws disregard young people’s agency.
**Abortion fully covered** in emergency packages and all insurance, including Medicaid and other public insurance, now and in the future.

- Abortion care is essential, life-sustaining health care. Emergency orders issued by federal, state, and municipal authorities must allow abortion care providers to continue serving patients.
- Emergency expansions of health coverage should include abortion care coverage and meet all the health needs people might have, without limitations. Expanding abortion coverage bans in COVID relief packages is unacceptable.
- More families will struggle to make ends meet as the economic fallout of this crisis worsens. Medicaid enrollees must be permitted to use their coverage to access abortion care.

**Act now:**
- [Join All Above All](#) and download their [Bold Toolkit](#) for igniting virtual actions in your community to end restrictions on abortion coverage.

**Learn more:**
- [Fact Sheet](#): Securing Public Insurance Coverage for Abortion
- Read the [amicus brief](#) If/When/How co-authored with the National Health Law Program and the National Network of Abortion Funds in the *June Medical Services v. Russo* U.S. Supreme Court case to better understand how abortion coverage bans work hand-in-hand with the targeting of abortion providers to block access and cause substantial harm to people experiencing poverty.

**Options for birth** expanded, protected, and supported.

- Pregnant people concerned about exposure are seeking out-of-hospital options for prenatal care and delivery, such as midwife-led birthing centers and home births. States should enable access to this care by improving access to midwives, facilitating seamless transfers to hospitals when necessary, and guaranteeing that out-of-hospital births are covered by public and private health insurance.
- Continuous support during labor can be a critical coping mechanism for birthing people, and can alleviate burdens on healthcare workers. Hospitals should prioritize ensuring that people have the physiological and emotional support they need, and take proper precautions to protect birth workers.

**Act now:**
- Encourage your lawmakers to issue guidance guaranteeing that birthing people are allowed a companion of their choosing, as [New York State has](#), and that all credentialed midwives can attend births without civil or criminal punishment from the state.

**Learn more:**
- [Fact Sheet](#): Improving Birth Experiences
- [Issue Brief](#): Enhancing Birth Options and Experiences
Welfare family caps suspended and repealed permanently.

- The consequences of this pandemic have been swift and harsh for low-income families, and the fallout is likely to continue for a long time to come. Denying public benefits to children born into families receiving cash assistance only pushes families into deeper, intractable poverty. Any cash assistance to families, pandemic-related or otherwise, must be free of any attempts to control people’s reproductive lives.

- Act now:
  - Find out if your state imposes caps on cash assistance to families with children. If you’re ready to take action, reach out to us, and we’ll work with you to organize wherever you are.

- Learn more:
  - Fact Sheet: Repealing Welfare Family Caps
  - Bringing Families out of ‘Cap’tivity: the Path Toward Abolishing Welfare Family Caps provides an overview of the origins and reach of these policies, highlighting their repercussions and chronicling repeal efforts in various states.

It should not take a global pandemic to move the United States forward in honoring our human right to reproductive self-determination, but this is the reality we live in. A failure to respond swiftly, creatively, and compassionately in this moment will devastate U.S. families for decades to come.