



FLORIDA

Medication Abortion Care & Telehealth Policies At A Glance

Abortion Care in Florida

- Women in Florida have limited access to abortion care. 73% of Florida counties in 2017 did not have an abortion provider.¹
- Abortion is an essential, time sensitive health care service. Medically unnecessary restrictions may push medication abortion care, which is a non-invasive abortion option that is approved for use by the FDA up to 10 weeks in pregnancy, out of reach for some of those who need it.
- Being denied abortion care negatively impacts the health and well-being of women and their families. Women who were denied a wanted abortion had four times greater odds of living below the Federal Poverty Level and were more likely to experience poorer health outcomes for years after the pregnancy.²
- People seeking abortion care already face significant barriers to receiving quality health care. Restrictions on abortion care and insurance coverage disproportionately impact people working to make ends meet, immigrants, young people, and women of color.³
- Floridians support access to abortion care. A majority [56%] of Florida voters say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.⁴

Telehealth: A Tool for Expanding Access to Medication Abortion Care in Florida

- Telehealth is a tool that can expand abortion access. Research shows that telehealth reduces barriers to care and can help patients access care earlier in pregnancy.⁵

For more information on telehealth for medication abortion care, visit:

- [Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care](#)
- [Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Process Chart](#)
- [Equity in Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care Checklist](#)

Restrictions that Limit the Provision of Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care

- **In-person consent and 24-hour waiting period requirements:** While there is a mandated in-person visit for abortion care and ultrasound, Florida does not ban telehealth usage. Providers may be able to satisfy any in-person requirements in one visit and use telehealth to meet any remaining requirements, followed by mail delivery of the medications so patients are not forced to visit the clinic twice.
 - Florida requires patients to receive certain information, “orally, while physically present in the same room, and at least 24 hours before the procedure.”⁶
 - **Impact:** This medically unnecessary restriction forces patients to visit a clinic for consultation and consent. In addition, waiting periods force patients to undergo a second medically unnecessary visit and delay a person’s ability to obtain abortion care.
 - There is no evidence that waiting periods improve medication abortion care’s safety.⁷

¹ Guttmacher Institute. [State Facts About Abortion: Florida](#). 2022.

² Greene Foster, G. [The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a Thousand Women, and the Consequences of Having—or Being Denied—an Abortion](#). June 2020.

³ Boonstra, H. [Abortion in the Lives of Women Struggling Financially: Why Insurance Coverage Matters](#). Guttmacher Policy Review. 2016.

⁴ Pew Research Center. [Views about abortion by state - Religion in America: US Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics](#). 2014.

⁵ Aiken, A., et al. [Effectiveness, safety and acceptability of no-test medical abortion provided via telemedicine: 16 a national cohort study](#). *British Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*. February 2021.

⁶ [Fla. Stat. 390.0111](#)

⁷ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. [The Safety and Quality of Abortion Care in the United States](#). National Academies Press. 2018.

- An overwhelming majority of women who choose abortion are already certain of their decision.⁸
 - Research shows that medication abortion care can be dispensed safely and effectively via telehealth or at a clinic and that medications can be safely mailed or picked up through a pharmacy.⁹
- **Ultrasound requirement:** Florida law requires patients undergo an ultrasound prior to an abortion.¹⁰
 - **Impact:** State-mandated ultrasounds contradict best clinical practice.
 - Research has shown that health care providers can accurately date a pregnancy via telehealth and there is no difference in safety or outcomes between those receiving an ultrasound and those who did not receive one before having an abortion.¹¹
- **Limitations on qualified health care providers:** Abortions, including medication abortion care via telehealth, can only be performed by licensed physicians.¹²
 - **Impact:** This medically unnecessary restriction limits the number and type of providers available to provide abortion care. As part of changes made by the FDA in 2016, any licensed health care provider is eligible to prescribe medication abortion care.¹³
 - ACOG and other medical associations affirm that nurse practitioners, physician assistants and midwives can safely and effectively provide medication abortion care.¹⁴
 - Research shows that expanding the pool of qualified health care providers would expand the availability and accessibility of care.¹⁵

Restrictions That Limit Coverage of Telehealth for Medication Abortion Care

- **In Florida, there is no coverage or payment parity for telehealth services:** As background, coverage parity requires the same services delivered in-person be covered if delivered by telehealth. Payment parity requires the same payment rate or amount to be reimbursed via telehealth as would be if it had been delivered in-person.¹⁶
 - There is no parity for video visits: Medicaid and other payers in Florida are allowed by law to cover real-time audio-video telehealth, but are not required to reimburse providers at all or at the same rate if the same care could be delivered in-person.¹⁷
 - There is no requirement that audio-only visits or store-and-forward (asynchronous) visits be covered: Florida telehealth policies and statutes that govern both Medicaid and other payers only cover video visits.
 - **Impact:** These restrictions disproportionately impact people of color and those struggling to make ends meet as it limits access to care for patients who are in areas with limited bandwidth or who lack devices or sufficient minutes on cellular plans to ensure a telehealth video visit can take place.
- **Lack of clarity regarding home as an eligible originating site:** The permanent telehealth policies and statutes that govern both Medicaid and other payers do not have specific definitions or requirements for originating sites, and do not specify that a patient's home is an eligible originating site.¹⁸
 - **Impact:** This could result in confusion by claims adjusters, in insurance contracts, or denial of claims, ultimately harming providers and patients.

⁸ Ralph, L. et. al. [Measuring decisional certainty among women seeking abortion](#). *Contraception*. March 2017.

⁹ Schummers, L., et al., [Abortion Safety and 11 Use with Normally Prescribed Mifepristone in Canada](#). *The New England Journal of Medicine*. January 2022.

¹⁰ F.S.A. § 390.0111 (3)(a)(1)(b)

¹¹ Aiken, Ara, Pa Lohr, J Lord, N Ghosh, and J Starling. "[Effectiveness, Safety and Acceptability of No-Test Medical Abortion \(Termination of Pregnancy\) Provided via Telemedicine: A National Cohort Study](#)." *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* 128, no. 9 (2021): 1464–74.

¹² F.S.A. § 390.012 (1)(c)(1); F.S.A. § 390.0111 (2)

¹³ Jones, R. & Boonstra, H. [The Public Health Implications of the FDA Update to the Medication Abortion Label](#). Guttmacher Institute. June 2016.

¹⁴ Weitz, T.A., et al., [Safety of Aspiration Abortion Performed by Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Physician Assistants Under a California Legal Waiver](#). *American Journal of Public Health*. March 2013.

¹⁵ ACOG. [Committee Opinion Number 815: Increasing Access to Abortion](#). December 2020.

¹⁶ [Parity Requirements for Private Payer Telehealth Services - CCHP](#)

¹⁷ [FL Medicaid Health Care Alert: Medicaid Telemedicine Guidance for Medical and Behavioral Health Providers \(March 18, 2020\)](#), FL Statute 456.47

¹⁸ [FL Admin. Code 59G-1.057](#)

- **Florida’s Medicaid program is prohibited from covering most abortion services, including telehealth, and there are no coverage protections for patients using private insurance:** Many payors do not cover abortion services in Florida, including for telehealth. In fact, health plans offered in the state’s health exchange under the Affordable Care Act can only cover abortion in cases of life endangerment, rape, or incest, unless individuals purchase an optional rider at an additional cost.
 - **Impact:** A lack of coverage can create insurmountable barriers for women already struggling to get affordable health care.¹⁹ Studies show that severe restrictions on Medicaid coverage or abortion forces one in four poor women seeking an abortion to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.²⁰
 - This forces patients to pay out of pocket for abortion care. 40% of adult Americans reported not being able to cover an unexpected \$400 expense, which is less than the cost of first trimester abortion care.^{21,22}

More information on telehealth in Florida:

- [Florida Information & Resources](#)
- [Florida Telehealth Frequently Asked Questions](#)

¹⁹ All* Above All. [Fact Sheet: About the Hyde Amendment](#). 2022.

²⁰ Henshaw, S., et al. [Restrictions on Medicaid Funding for Abortions: A Literature Review](#). Guttmacher Institute. June 2009.

²¹ Bhutta, N. & Dettling, L. [Money in the Bank? Assessing Families' Liquid Savings using the Survey of Consumer Finances](#). U.S. Federal Reserve Board. 2019.

²² Upadhyay, U., et al. [Trends In Self-Pay Charges And Insurance Acceptance For Abortion In The United States, 2017–20](#). *Health Affairs*. April 2022.